

# **Promising Restraint:**

## **The Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Policy**

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## Abbreviations

ACDA	Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
AECA	Arms Export Control Act
AECB	Arms Export Control Board
ASPR	Armed Services Procurement Division
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
CAT	Conventional Arms Transfers
CBU	Cluster Bomb Units
COCOM	Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls
DSAA	Defense Security Assistance Agency
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act
FMCS	Foreign Military Construction Sales
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FX	Fighter for Export
GAO	General Accounting Office
HIRC	House International Relations Committee
IMETP	International Military Education and Training Program
ITAR	International Traffic in Arms Regulations
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
NSC	National Security Council
OMC	Office of Munitions Control
PD	Presidential Directive
PRC	Policy Review Committee
PRM	Presidential Review Memorandum
R&D	Research and Development
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SAPRC	Security Assistance Program Review Committee
SCC	Special Coordinating Committee
SSA	Security Supporting Assistance
TOW	Tube-launched, Optically-guided, Wire-controlled

## Introduction

In 1975, the United States was responsible for about half of all arms transfers worldwide, and a majority of the U.S. transfers went to Third World countries. As this situation became more widely known, there came a growing conviction among large parts of the press, the general public and Congress that the U.S. arms transfer policy needed revision. By the 1976 U.S. Presidential campaign, arms transfers had become an important foreign policy issue.

In his campaign, presidential candidate Jimmy Carter criticized the administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford for their management of arms transfers. He promised to work for reductions in global transfers, repeatedly asserting that the U.S. 'cannot be both the world's leading champion of peace and the world's leading supplier of weapons of war.'<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2 will comprehensively examine Carter's rationales for calling for reductions in global arms transfers. Suffice it here to note that this was not mere campaign rhetoric, but an issue Carter was sincerely concerned about. When Carter took office on January 20, 1977, he explicitly committed himself to work for worldwide reductions in conventional arms transfers, through unilateral cutbacks and through multilateral restraint agreements. This thesis will examine the Carter Administration's implementation of its arms transfer policy.

## The unilateral arms transfer restraint policy

In his official announcement of the new policy on May 19, 1977, Carter promised to make arms transfers the exception rather than the rule of U.S. policy, and place the burden of justification on those who advocated a specific arms sale rather than on those who opposed it. Further, he assured that arms transfers would only 'be used in instances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfer contributes to our national security interests.'<sup>2</sup>

The new arms transfer policy was formulated in a comprehensive set of six quantitative and qualitative guidelines in Presidential Directive 13 (PD-13), announced on May 19, 1977. The guidelines, which will be examined in chapter 2, were meant to ensure:

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<sup>1</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, "Arms Sales," *Foreign Policy*, No. 25, 1976-77, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

- reductions of the quantity and quality of U.S. arms transfers;
- stricter rules on co-production and third-country transfers of armaments of U.S. origin;
- more government control over transfers, by reducing the promotional activities of the defense industry.

This policy was from the outset criticized for being less radical than Carter had promised during the election campaign. However, the policy of unilaterally self-imposed restraint was the most restrictive arms transfer policy since the U.S.A. became a major arms exporter following World War II. If fully implemented, PD-13 would have seriously limited the volume and technological sophistication of U.S. arms exports.

## Research questions

This thesis focuses on two main questions:

- to what extent were the P-13 guidelines followed up in practice,
- and if they were not fully implemented, why?

These questions will be answered by examining when and where the policy was the most successful, why it was more forcefully implemented toward certain regions and countries than toward others, and why it was more consistently implemented during the first years of the Carter Presidency than later. Finally, the thesis will seek to identify under exactly what circumstances President Carter was able to implement reductions in U.S. arms transfers. To date, the lack of success for the policy has been explained by changes in the international environment, and/or bureaucratic resistance. The salience of these factors will be discussed, in addition to additional possible explanations, such as the failed effort to involve other arms producers.

The arms trade policy was part of a larger picture: Carter's "moralistic" or "world order" foreign policy. Thus it is natural to present other elements of the Carter Administration's foreign policy, such as its commitment to work for global human rights, and efforts to engage governments in other arms control negotiations, where these were relevant for the conventional arms transfer policy. Some scholars have asserted that Carter abandoned this moralistic policy platform when the international political environment changed.<sup>3</sup> The thesis will explore to what degree the policy

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation. American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington D.C., 1985, pp. 623–1121; and Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years*, New York, 1986.

became affected by the deterioration of the international environment. Further, if the policy failed because of other developments, is it possible to date or pinpoint which event(s) contributed to its failure?

## **Did the policy succeed?**

Scholarly accounts differ as to the degree to which Carter's policy had any effect. Some consider it a total failure, while others describe it as a qualified success. Key administration officials have admitted its relative failure. In his memoirs, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski recognized that 'high moral ambitions produced slender results.'<sup>4</sup> In September 1980, Leslie Gelb, Director of the Office of Politico-Military Affairs until April 1979, said that the policy had been 'very unsuccessful,' and that the Carter Administration had handled arms transfers mainly in the same manner as had been done during the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.<sup>5</sup>

I will hypothesize that that the Carter Administration implemented its new policy of restraint in arms transfers only toward those regions and countries that were perceived as having little strategic importance. Further, that the policy became watered down over time, and no longer had any effect when the Cold War intensified in 1979. The thesis will test these two hypotheses; and, if they are substantiated, seek to establish the conditions under which such a policy might have succeeded – towards what kinds of countries, at what particular junctures, and under what circumstances.

## **Diplomatic efforts**

In his announcement of the arms transfer restraint policy, Carter stated that because the U.S.A. was the world's largest weapons exporter, it was natural that Washington should be the first to introduce restraint. Nevertheless, the President also made it clear that he intended to pursue multilateral measures, and that 'reductions would require multilateral cooperation.'<sup>6</sup> However, attempts to include other arms suppliers in negotiations on multilateral arms transfer restraint were unavailing. The only major arms supplier the Carter Administration managed to involve in serious discussions on

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<sup>4</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 – 1981*, New York, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> "An Interview with Leslie Gelb," *Arms Control Today*, No. 8, September 1980, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, 19 May 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 931.



the topic was the Soviet Union. The CAT (Conventional Arms Transfers) talks between the two superpowers lasted one year before collapsing in December 1978.

Chapter 3 will examine the development of the diplomatic efforts and analyze why they failed. In addition, the chapter will discuss how the results of the multilateral measures contributed to the development and fate of the unilateral policy. However, because the diplomatic initiative did not bear any fruit and lasted only one year, the focus of the thesis will be on the unilateral policy. This will be examined through eight case studies in part two of the thesis. The case studies cover U.S. arms transfer decisions concerning ten countries in Asia and Africa, and the whole of Latin America.

## **Case studies**

U.S. arms transfer decisions are made under several different programs. To find out to what extent the new arms transfer policy was implemented, it is necessary to examine how the Carter Administration applied the policy to individual sales to specific countries and regions. Moreover, each transfer request would still be decided individually; and because the guidelines of PD-13 were general and open to several interpretations, only the administration's application of PD-13 to specific individual cases can show if it was serious in its effort to restrain U.S. arms transfers. This is why a substantial part of this thesis will be dedicated to case studies.

The U.S. Government decides on thousands of arms sale requests every year. Lower-level bureaucrats make most of these decisions on a routine basis. The cases chosen here, however, were all major sales involving full-scale review processes by top-level administration officials, and were often accompanied by controversy. The cases have been chosen not only for their size, but also to enable us to explore under what conditions the arms-sales policy could succeed. Together, the sample of cases should provide a representative overview of PD-13 was implemented in relation to the importing countries' assumed importance to other foreign-policy objectives of the U.S.A., and how the policy was implemented over time, especially in connection with the deteriorating superpower relationship. In addition, the cases will examine the human rights conditions in the importing countries; historical commitments to the security of the importing country; the arms transfer relationship between the U.S.A. and the recipient prior to Carter's presidency; the sophistication of the weapons being requested; and Congressional concern about U.S. arms transfers to the country in question.

The cases are discussed in a sequence that first presents one region (Latin America), and one country (Pakistan) where the arms restraint policy did have effect. The other cases are presented in a way that provides a chronological overview of the Carter Administration's main arms transfer decisions. Iran was the single largest customer for U.S. weapons until the fall of the Shah in early 1979, and the U.S. arms transfer program to Iran was hotly debated, especially in 1977, when the administration offered the Shah AWACS aircraft. The arms transfer programs to South Korea and the Philippines were constantly discussed within the administration and in Congress throughout 1977 and 1978, especially because of the human rights situation in these countries. The "aircraft package" to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia was one of the Carter's most controversial foreign policy decisions in 1978; and after the fall of the Shah, these countries became the largest recipients of U.S. armaments. The March 1979 decision to provide North Yemen with a sizeable arms package was a result of the renewed superpower competition on the Arabian Peninsula. When Carter signed the arms for access-to-bases agreement with Somalia in August 1980, he abandoned his principle of not providing any of the warring parties in the Horn of Africa with armaments. The U.S. arms transfer relationship with Taiwan was discussed throughout the presidency in light of the ongoing normalization of relations talks between Washington and Beijing.

## Sources

Not all the material drawn on in the study will be identified or discussed here – only those most frequently used and those considered the most important.

## Secondary sources

There are two book-length works dealing primarily with the Carter Administration's arms transfer policy: Graham Kearns' *Arms for the Poor: President Carter's Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*,<sup>7</sup> and Joanna Spear's *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*.<sup>8</sup> In addition, some scholarly articles have been published on the subject, notably those by Nicole Ball and Milton Leitenberg; Paul Hammond, David Louscher and Michael Salomone; Jo

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<sup>7</sup> Graham Kearns, *Arms for the Poor: President Carter's Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*, Canberra, 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*, Ipswich, 1995.

L. Husbands; and William Hartung.<sup>9</sup> The studies by Kearns, Ball and Leitenberg, and by Hammond et al., were written during the Carter Presidency or shortly after Carter left office, and provide little more than information on the administration's objectives, with some reviews of individual transfer decisions. The works by Hartung and Spear, written in 1993 and 1995 respectively, analyze the policy's degree of success and explain why the policy was not more fully implemented. Spear's book, the most comprehensive study on the subject to date, concludes that the arms transfer policy failed because of resistance among key foreign affairs and national security officials, and because Carter's foreign policy experienced a rightward drift as a result of deterioration of the international environment, and became less concerned with arms transfer restraint. This interpretation is to a large degree shared by Hartung.

Because there is relatively little published scholarship on Carter's arms transfer policy, the secondary sources used in this thesis are mainly scholarly works treating Carter's foreign policy in general and studies of U.S. and global arms transfers. While none of these broad studies give much consideration to the arms transfer policy, many of the works on arms transfers pay considerable attention to Carter's restraint policy.

There are several scholarly works treating U.S. foreign policy during the Carter Presidency. Among the most influential, and most frequently used in this thesis, are works by Raymond Garthoff, Burton Kaufman (which covers both domestic and foreign policy), Gaddis Smith, and Richard Thornton.<sup>10</sup> None of these works examines the arms transfer policy comprehensively. Nevertheless, they provide useful information on other foreign policy aspects that influenced arms transfers, such as relations with other countries (especially the Soviet Union, NATO allies, Iran, and China), other parts of Carter's "world order policy" (such as his commitment to human rights), and relations and disagreements between the administration's foreign policy and national security officials.

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<sup>9</sup> Nicole Ball and Milton Leitenberg, "The Foreign Arms Sales of the Carter Administration," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, February 1979, pp. 31–36; Paul Y. Hammond, David Louscher and Michael D. Salomone, "Lessons from the Carter Approach to Restraining Arms Transfers," *Survival*, Vol. 23, No. 5, 1981, pp. 200–208; and William D. Hartung, "Why Sell Arms? Lessons from the Carter Years," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1993, pp. 57–64.

<sup>10</sup> Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*; Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, Kansas, 1993, Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*; and Richard C. Thornton, *The Carter Years: Towards a New Global Order*, Washington D.C., 1992.

Three published memoirs – of Jimmy Carter, of National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance – proved valuable in writing this thesis.<sup>11</sup> Like all memoirs, they are selective in their choice of subjects, but together they provide a comprehensive description of U.S. foreign policy from 1977 to 1981, and they are revealing in what they tell about their authors. None of them dedicates much space to the arms transfer policy. However, this very lack can give valuable information: either the arms transfer policy was not seen as important, or the policy was unsuccessful and thus not worth writing about.

As criticism of the U.S. arms transfer policy mounted during the 1970s, the number of works on global arms transfers, and especially on U.S. transfers, increased rapidly. U.S. scholars dominate the literature on U.S. arms transfers in the 1970s and early 1980s. There is no consensus among these specialists, but they concur in being critical of their government's arms sales policy. The most influential, and the most used in this thesis, are works by Cynthia Arnson, Duncan Clarke, Michael Klare, David Louscher, Janne Nolan, Michael Salomone, and Andrew Pierre. Although these scholars are highly critical of U.S. arms sales policy, and some of them tend to oversimplify how U.S. government policy is made and decided upon, they provide accurate descriptions of individual arms transfers.

Arms control was discussed widely in U.S. newspapers during the period in question. The information thus provided on the viewpoints of various groups and individuals on both specific sales decisions and the policy in general is useful. The newspapers most often referred to in the thesis are *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, both of which gave extensive coverage of U.S. arms transfer policy. A majority of the articles were found by searching for key words – such as arms transfers, and military aid – in the annual reference volumes published by the major U.S. newspapers.

## **Primary sources**

First, it is important to note that certain primary sources have not been utilized in this study. The use of other government sources than U.S. ones would have shed light on several aspects of Carter's arms transfer policy: especially Soviet government sources could have proved valuable in the analysis of Carter's efforts at engaging Moscow in

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<sup>11</sup> Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, New York, 1982; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*; and Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York, 1983.

arms supplier restraint. However, because of lack of resources, time, and language skills, the primary sources are exclusively American. The U.S. Departments of State and Defense are, together with the White House, the major decision-makers in U.S. arms transfer policy. Because it regularly takes more than 30 years before documents from these departments are declassified, most of the unpublished primary sources used in this thesis are White House documents. The President is the top authority on all U.S. arms transfers, and large and/or controversial transfer requests were submitted for decision to the White House National Security Council staff and sometimes to the President himself. Therefore, although documents from the departments of State and Defense would have been informative, the White House documents cover most aspects involving the major arms transfer decisions made during the Carter Administration.

The majority of the primary sources utilized are housed in the Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta, Georgia. The archive possesses approximately 27 million White House documents, but only a third of them had been declassified at the time of my visit (March–April 2002). Thus, the archive may well hold numerous documents, not yet open to the public, which could provide important information on both the transfer restraint policy and export decisions. Probably the most important of these are found in the files of the National Security Adviser, but only a small portion of these documents had been declassified. Still, the quality and quantity of the White House documents used in this study should be sufficient to provide a basis for examining the Carter Administration's arms transfer policy and its implementation.

The document collections of the National Security Archive at the George Washington University in Washington D.C. also proved to contain helpful information. The Archive's holdings, which are primarily obtained through use of the Freedom of Information Act, include revealing documents about U.S. arms transfers in general and specific export decisions made by the Carter Administration.

In addition to the unpublished primary sources, there are important published primary sources. During Carter's Presidency, there were several Congressional hearings on both the arms transfer policy in general and specific sales decisions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations of the Senate*, 1 and 2 February 1978, Washington D.C., 1978;

These hearings provide information on how administration officials justified arms transfers, and how Capitol Hill received sales decisions and the restraint policy. Also important are research reports on U.S. arms sales policy by Congressional committees and the Congressional Research Service. These reports are mainly used as background information on rationales behind U.S. arms transfers, and the laws and regulations guiding the arms transfer policy. *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, contains all of Carter's public speeches.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, *American Foreign Policy 1977–1980: Basic Documents*, contains speeches, addresses and reports by all the administration's foreign policy officials. These sources are good indicators of how the President and his advisers wanted the public to perceive the administration's foreign policy. Finally, the weekly *Department of State Bulletin* includes press releases, statements and speeches made by the President and Department of State officials. *The Foreign Relations of the United States* series (FRUS), which contains a selection of official documents from most U.S. government foreign affairs agencies, was, however, not published for the period relevant for the topic of this thesis.

## Arms transfer data

It is important to acknowledge that there are large methodological problems related to arms trade statistics, and that the figures are frequently no more than estimates. However, and fortunately for this study, there are more available data on arms exports from the U.S.A. than from any other arms producing country, and the data for the U.S.A. tend to be more reliable. This is because the U.S.A. was the only government in the 1970s that presented comprehensive annual reports on its arms exports.

The data on arms sales in this thesis are mainly taken from three sources, all published annually: the U.S. Department of Defense Security Assistance Agency's (DSAA) *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts*; the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's (ACDA) *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*; and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) yearbooks. These

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*Proposed Sales of Military Equipment and Services to Egypt: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives*, 15 September 1977, Washington D.C., 1977; *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia: Hearings Before the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives*, 8, 9, 10 and 16 May 1978, Washington D.C., 1978; and *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives*, 12 March 1979, Washington D.C., 1979.

<sup>13</sup> *American Foreign Policy 1977–1980: Basic Documents*, Washington D.C., 1983.

three sources differ in many respects; they have their individual strengths and weaknesses; and the data they present are often incompatible. The differences spring from different methodologies and sources of information.

DSAA provides data on U.S. sales and grants of military equipment and services. One major asset of the DSAA reports is that, unlike the ACDA and SIPRI statistics that solely focus on deliveries, they estimate the dollar value of both arms sales agreements and actual deliveries. Because it often takes several years from the time contracts are signed until the arms are paid for and delivered, this provides indispensable information for this study, which focuses on a relatively short period (1977 to 1981). Another advantage of DSAA statistics is that they differentiate among the various U.S. arms transfer programs, such as government sales, government grants, and commercial sales.

The ACDA reports are used by most of the scholars studying global and U.S. arms transfers in the period. An advantage with these reports is that the data, unlike in the DSAA report and SIPRI yearbooks, are provided in both constant and current dollars, which makes interval comparisons easy. In addition, ACDA reports on other informative features of the global arms sales, such as the percentage of arms sales compared to the country's total exports. Unlike all other sources, ACDA provides comprehensive statistics on exports and imports by all countries. A weakness of the ACDA reports' statistics on U.S. data is that they do not differentiate among the various arms transfer programs but lump them together.

SIPRI is the only non-governmental and non-U.S. source used in this study. While statistics from ACDA and DSAA cover all weapons systems, SIPRI's data are more limited and cover only major conventional arms, such as military aircraft, warships, missiles and tanks. According to scholar Keith Krause, this frequently makes ACDA figures from 1.8 to 2 times higher than SIPRI data.<sup>14</sup>

It is too large a task, and beyond the main subject of this thesis, to try to establish which of the sources are closer to the truth. Frank Blackaby and Thomas Ohlson, both affiliated with SIPRI, explain that the ACDA and SIPRI data for the period in question are in concordance on the rate of growth in the global trade, and the pattern of

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<sup>14</sup> Keith Krause, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 216–217.

recipients. However, they observe that the sources differ on the pattern of suppliers. SIPRI generally applies a larger share of global transactions to U.S. transfers than ACDA does.<sup>15</sup> While U.S. government statistics on other countries' transfers were based on open trade statistics and intelligence sources, SIPRI based all its data on publicly available information. This makes the SIPRI data verifiable, and the U.S. government data unverifiable. The two U.S. government sources generally correlate. In this thesis, either DSAA or ACDA data are usually used as sources. SIPRI data are used less frequently, and generally either because they include information that the U.S. government data do not, or where there are important discrepancies between the sources which need to be considered. One major problem with this approach is that the data may be distorted because of U.S. government political and security considerations. However, since a study like this needs to be partially based on quantitative variables, and the U.S. government data provide the only comprehensive statistics on U.S. exports, there is no way to avoid this problem.

It has not been possible, nor has it been my intention, to make use of all the sources available. The objective has been to get access to and utilize a sufficient amount of sources to enable an analysis of the degree to which Carter's arms transfer policy succeeded; where and when it was most forcefully implemented; and why it was not more successful.

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<sup>15</sup> Frank Blackaby and Thomas Ohlson, "Military Expenditure and the Arms Trade: Problems of Data," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1982, p. 295.



## **Part 1: Background, PD-13 and Diplomatic Efforts**

### **Chapter 1**

## **The Decision-Making Process and U.S. Arms Transfer Policy Prior to Carter**

To understand the motives behind the Carter Administration's arms transfer policy, its implementation and effects, it is necessary to examine the arms export policy inherited by Jimmy Carter and the system under which he had to operate. This chapter provides a short introduction to the development of U.S. and global arms transfers prior to Carter, the rationales guiding U.S. arms transfer policy, and the decision-making process and regulations under which all U.S. arms transfers were made.

### **Developments in the arms trade**

#### **Developments in global transactions**

From the early 1960s until the mid-1970s, the volume of global arms transfers increased greatly. The U.S. government records that weapons exports grew from \$3.2 billion in 1963 to \$9.9 billion in 1972 and \$15.6 billion by 1976.<sup>1</sup>

Although several factors converged to increase global arms sales, higher oil prices were the most important, especially after the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised prices in 1973 and 1974. This price increase contributed to balance-of-payments problems for oil-importing countries; and as some of them were also major arms producers, this made them more willing to sell armaments, so as to shore up some of the petrodollars. In addition, the increasing oil sales and the higher prices provided the oil-rich countries with the financial resources to enhance their military forces with more and better armaments and subsidize purchases by allies. Also other factors contributed to the change in global arms transactions: the increase in the number of nation-states, rising from approximately 60 in 1945 to 150 by 1980,

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<sup>1</sup> In current dollars. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Trade 1963–1973*, Washington D.C., 1974, p. 72; and U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth ACDA, WMEAT] 1968–1977, Washington D.C., 1979, p. 113

all seeking to develop indigenous defense forces;<sup>2</sup> the development of more sophisticated weapons systems resulting in higher prices; and a proliferation of arms producers, which created more competition and increased sales.

Accompanying the increase in volume during the 1960s and 70s was a qualitative rise in the weapons being exported. While earlier transfers to non-industrial countries had mostly involved obsolete, second-generation weapons, in the late 1960s the major weapons producers began to sell Third World countries new and highly sophisticated arms.<sup>3</sup> The increasing proliferation of supersonic aircraft and sophisticated missiles illustrates this tendency. In 1960, four developing countries<sup>4</sup> possessed supersonic aircraft. By 1977, this number had increased to 47. In 1965, 19 developing countries had missiles; by 1975, 39 countries had such weapon systems.<sup>5</sup>

While the level of arms imports by the developed countries remained fairly constant, imports by the developing countries increased greatly. Between 1970 and 1977, arms imports by developing countries grew at an average of 13 percent a year.<sup>6</sup> By the time Carter took office, these countries had become the largest arms recipients, accounting for approximately 80 percent of all imports.<sup>7</sup> The greatest growth by far occurred in the Middle East,<sup>8</sup> which in 1976 accounted for almost 40 percent of global arms imports.<sup>9</sup> Although exports of arms to other less-developed regions, such as Latin America and Africa, did not grow at the same rate as that of the Middle East, also these regions increased their imports in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1976, African and Latin American countries purchased approximately \$2.5 billion and \$1 billion worth of military equipment, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

When Carter took office, the United States was believed to be the largest arms exporter, accounting for one third of the worldwide trade in arms, followed by the

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> "Developing countries" and "Third World countries" are terms used in the thesis to account for the same group of states.

<sup>5</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1981*, London, 1981, p. 244.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Brzoska and Thomas Ohlson, *Arms Transfers to the Third World, 1971-85*, New York, 1987, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Author's calculations. ACDA, *WMEAT 1969-1978*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> In ACDA's annual publication on global arms transfers, the geographical term "Middle East" refers to: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, North Yemen, and South Yemen.

<sup>9</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1969-1978*, pp. 117-119.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Soviet Union (25 percent), France (7 percent), and the United Kingdom (5 percent).<sup>11</sup> The Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), whose statistics often diverge from U.S. government statistics, reported that these four countries exported 90 percent of all arms going to developing countries in 1976.<sup>12</sup>

## **Developments in the United States transfers**

Arms transfers by the U.S.A. increased only gradually from the end of World War II to the late 1960s, but took a jump during the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. According to Department of Defense data, U.S. arms sales agreements made under the Foreign Military Sales program totaled approximately \$1.4 billion in fiscal year 1971. In fiscal year 1976 more than \$14 billion worth of weapons were contracted for under the same program<sup>13</sup> (more on the various programs below).<sup>14</sup> Not only was the U.S.A. the biggest arms supplier, as measured in quantity, it was also the country which exported to the largest number of countries. In 1976, the U.S.A. provided some 80 governments with weapons and military services.<sup>15</sup>

Several factors contributed to this increase. In addition to the reasons accounting for increase in exports by all major arms suppliers, the rise in U.S. transfers also had some unique characteristics. Most important were the changes in U.S. foreign policy which came partly as a result of the Vietnam War. With the Nixon Doctrine, announced in 1969 in the period of "Vietnamization," and the gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, came new principles for U.S. security assistance. Because of the failure and massive criticism of the U.S. entrapment in Indochina, the Nixon Administration sought to avoid direct military intervention or use of ground troops abroad in the future. Thereafter, friends and allies were to assume primary responsibility for their own defense. This doctrine became implemented through reductions in U.S. military presence overseas and the enhancement of the military

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<sup>11</sup> The percentages are approximations calculated by the author. ACDA, *WMEAT 1969-1978*, pp. 117-155.

<sup>12</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1977*, Stockholm, 1977, p. 309

<sup>13</sup> These were arms sales agreements. Because it takes years before many agreements are transformed into actual deliveries and because many contracts are later revoked, this figure does not indicate that the U.S.A. transferred this amount of weapons in 1976.

<sup>14</sup> Both values in current-year dollars. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [Henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, pp. 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-12.

power of selected countries by assistance in the form of more and better training and military equipment.

Up until the mid-1960s, the NATO countries constituted the primary market for U.S. weapons, but from then on, Third World countries became the major recipients. The increase in transfers from the early 1970s was mainly a result of large exports to Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel: in fiscal year 1977, the Middle East accounted for approximately 75 percent of all sales.<sup>16</sup> Government-negotiated sales agreements to the two biggest customers in the period, Saudi Arabia and Iran, rose from a total of \$370 million in 1971 to \$9 billion by 1976.<sup>17</sup> Together with Israel, these two countries accounted for more than 60 percent of all U.S. transfers in the period 1974–1978.<sup>18</sup>

## **The rationales behind U.S. arms exports**

After World War II, arms exports became more important for U.S. policy. When Carter took office, they had become a central element of its foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> There were several rationales behind U.S. arms exports. The purposes could be political, military, economic, or most often, a combination of these.<sup>20</sup> The most common government justification for arms sales was the need to enhance the internal and external defenses of friends and allies. However, there have also been other rationales behind U.S. arms transfers.

Throughout the Cold War, arms transfers were frequently used by the United States and the Soviet Union as instruments in their geostrategic competition. Both superpowers sold and granted to their respective allies large quantities of military

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *Conventional Arms Transfers: Background Information*, Washington, D.C., 1978, p. 158.

<sup>17</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, pp. 1–2.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Congress, *Conventional Arms Transfers*, p. 158.

<sup>19</sup> In 1979, Ronfelt and Sexeseres argued that 'U.S. arms sales have become the most prominent, and perhaps the most important, instrument for conducting U.S. foreign policy on a bilateral basis.' David Ronfelt and Caesar Sexeseres, "U.S. Arms Transfers, Diplomacy, and Security in Latin America," in Andrew J. Pierre, ed., *Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy*, New York, 1979, p. 121. This assertion was shared by most experts on U.S. arms transfers. See, for example, Husbands, who compared U.S. arms transfers with 'old-fashioned patent medicines – touted as an all-purpose cure for the nation's foreign and economic policy ailments.' Jo. L. Husbands, "A World in Arms: Geography of the Weapons Trade," *Focus*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1980, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> For comprehensive analysis of the rationales behind U.S. arms transfers, see, Michael T. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, Austin, TX, 1984, pp. 27–35; Keith Krause, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 97–112; and Paul L. Ferrari, Jeffrey W. Knopf, and Raúl L. Madrid, *US Arms Exports: Policies and Contractors*, Washington D.C., 1987, pp. 55–68.

equipment. Throughout the period, and in line with the Truman Doctrine of 1947, a main rationale behind U.S. arms transfer policy was to aid friends and allies in building national defenses to fight the Soviet Union and international Communism. Arms sales and grants were used to induce foreign governments to decrease their cooperation with the Soviet Union and as glue to strengthen the cohesion among friends and allies. This motivation increased in importance following the U.S. military engagement in Indochina, as Washington became more restrictive in stationing U.S. troops overseas.

Because there were a few countries capable of producing sophisticated weapons systems, the arms market was a sellers' market. The U.S.A., as the largest producer, thus gained leverage and influence over the political behavior of arms recipients.<sup>21</sup> Such leverage could be obtained by placing conditions upon sales – mainly in the form of positive or negative reinforcements through promises of further transactions or threats of withholding new arms, spare parts or services. It is also believed that leverage was gained by the explicit or implicit security relationship that major arms transactions created between the parties involved.<sup>22</sup> The leverage gained by arms transfers was intended to fulfill several objectives, among them access to important resources, notably oil; access to military bases for U.S. forces; access to intelligence-gathering facilities; and more general influence over the recipient countries' authorities to ensure that they acted in a manner advantageous to the objectives of U.S. foreign policy.

Political and security factors were the most important rationales behind U.S. arms transfers. However, economic motivations, though rarely referred to in official justifications for individual sales, became increasingly important during the 1970s. By prolonging production lines and recouping research and development expenses, Pentagon costs for domestic procurement were reduced. In addition, arms exports provided employment. According to a 1976 Labor Department study, every \$1 billion

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<sup>21</sup> Because of the larger number of arms producers in the 1970s, scholars began discussing whether the arms sales market had become a buyers' market, and if the leverage had been reversed. For this discussion, see Ferrari et al., *U.S. Arms Exports*, pp. 7–14; and T. V. Paul "Influence Through Arms Transfers: Lessons from the U.S.–Pakistani Relationship," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 12, pp. 1079–1081. However, when Carter took office, the main conviction in Washington was that arms sales generally provided the U.S.A. with positive leverage.

<sup>22</sup> Robert D. McKinley and Anthony Mughan, *Aid and Arms to the Third World: An Analysis of the Distribution and Impact of U.S. Official Transfers*, New York, 1984, pp. 6–7.

in arms sales provided employment for 51,000 workers.<sup>23</sup> This factor gained further importance in the 1970s, as unemployment was high and the trade balance was negative. In addition, the end of the Vietnam War decreased U.S. military spending, resulting in marked losses for the domestic defense industry. Whereas the Pentagon had procured \$44 billion worth of weapons in 1968, the value decreased to \$17 billion in 1975.<sup>24</sup> Even if arms exports accounted for no more than 5 percent of total U.S. merchandise exports in 1976,<sup>25</sup> the importance of exports was high for individual producers, and major companies such as Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, Northrop and Raytheon depended on overseas sales for much of their revenues.

## **Processes and laws governing U.S. arms transfers**

The legislative framework and the programs governing arms sales are often altered by Congress and the Executive Branch to reflect changing policy priorities in Washington. The U.S. actors involved in the decision-making are many, and range from lower-level bureaucrats to top-political officials, the President and Congress.

### **Arms transfer programs**

All U.S. arms transfers are made through one of the government-run programs or through commercial sales. The programs are subject to differing requirements concerning processes, regulations, funding, and Congressional control.

### **Government-to-government transfers**

The U.S. government transfers arms and defense services under various programs, which all fall under the “umbrella term” of security assistance. Government-negotiated arms transfers are authorized by the Department of State and managed by the Department of Defense, but a number of other departments and agencies are often involved in the process as well. Transfers made through government channels are normally perceived to be more strategically and politically important and attracts greater attention than commercial sales. In 1977 the largest and most important Government-run arms transfer programs were the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, the Military Assistance Program (MAP), and the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program.

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<sup>23</sup> Max Holland, “The Myth of Arms Restraint,” *Congressional Record – Senate*, 9 July 1979, p. 9840.

<sup>24</sup> Values in constant dollars. Jacques S. Gansler, *The Defense Industry*, Cambridge, MA, 1980, p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1968–1977*, p. 151.

The FMS program was throughout Carter's Presidency governed by the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) of 1976. Military equipment and services sold through the FMS program are either transferred through cash sales or through U.S. government-financed credits. The 1976 AECA stated that all sales made under the FMS program were required to 'strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace.'<sup>26</sup> By the time of Carter's inauguration, this had become the largest U.S. arms transfer program; transfer agreements made under FMS reached approximately \$11.3 billion in FY 1977.<sup>27</sup>

The Military Assistance Program (MAP) was in the period under review governed by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1971. This program comprises grants of and loans for purchase of military equipment, facilities and technical assistance. Congress annually reviews and appropriates funds for assistance to specified countries. This provides Congress more control over transfers made under this program than under the FMS program. From the end of World War II up to the early 1970s MAP was the largest arms transfer program, as the U.S.A. sent massive supplies of military equipment on a grant basis to friendly countries perceived to be threatened by internal and/or external Communist forces. By the time of the Carter Presidency, however, the program had decreased to a mere fraction of the FMS program. In 1977 transfers made under MAP valued \$108 million and funds were granted only to a few key countries.<sup>28</sup> Grants were now offered mainly to countries seen as particularly threatened because they bordered on Communist countries, such as Taiwan, South Korea and Turkey; and to countries, such as Spain and the Philippines, where the U.S.A. operated military bases and intelligence facilities.

The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program is a grant program for military instruction of foreign students, whether in the U.S.A. or abroad. The official rationale for this program was to enhance U.S. relations with the arms receiving country 'and to improve the ability of participating countries to utilize their resources, including defense resources obtained from the United States, with

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<sup>26</sup> Congressional Research Service, *United States Arms Transfer and Security Assistance Programs*, Washington D.C., 1978, pp. 46–47.

<sup>27</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1978 edition, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 40.

maximum effectiveness.<sup>29</sup> From its inception in 1950 until 1977, some 456,000 foreign personnel were trained under the program.<sup>30</sup>

### **Commercial Sales**

During Carter's tenure, the U.S. government controlled commercial sales through the 1976 Arms Export Control Act, but it was not a direct participant in the transactions. These sales involved the direct transfer of military equipment and services between private U.S. corporations and foreign recipients. Export of items listed on the U.S. Munitions List was prohibited without a license from the Office of Munitions Control of the Department of State. In fiscal year 1977, commercial sales of military equipment and services reached approximately \$1.5 billion.<sup>31</sup> The level of commercial sales was low in comparison with the government programs, but it was the most important channel for U.S. exports of small arms, light weapons and police equipment – weapons often instrumental in fuelling local armed conflicts. Thus it was clear that, if Carter were serious in his promise to link human rights and arms sales, he would have to control commercial sales as well as government transfers.

## **The decision-makers**

### **The Executive Branch**

The U.S. arms transfer decision-making process involves various parts of the Executive Branch, and all arms sales are handled on a case-by-case basis. Major transfer decisions are conducted in multiple review processes, involving several departments and agencies with overlapping responsibilities. Because of difference in the institutional functions of the departments and agencies, they often have different opinions. The Department of Defense emphasizes military factors, the Department of State political factors, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, until it was abolished in 1998, arms control factors.<sup>32</sup>

By law, the President is the top authority on all decisions relating to import and export of military material and services. However, most transfer decisions are made by low-level bureaucrats in the State and the Defense Departments, with more

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<sup>29</sup> Congressional Research Service, *United States Arms Transfer and Security Assistance Programs*, p. XII.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, pp. 35 and 68.



sensitive decisions handled by top-ranking officials in the same departments. Decisions that involve important policy considerations are sometimes submitted to the President. The role exercised by the President is usually indirect: he is the central official in developing general foreign policy objectives and arms transfer guidance, policy toward individual countries and regions, and participates in the creation of security assistance budgets.

Decision-making authority on arms transfers is centered in the Department of State, which during most of Carter's period was led by Cyrus Vance. Within the State Department various agencies are involved in the processes. The main agency is the State Department is the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs. This agency was under the direction of Leslie Gelb from January 1977 until he resigned in April 1979 and was replaced by Reginald Bartholomew. It functions as the Secretary's support staff on all issues relating to military aid, security assistance, and international defense cooperation. This is also the agency where all foreign requests are first evaluated, before being referred to other relevant agencies for review. The regional bureaus and country desks within the Department are also important players, as they reviews and advises on transactions to individual states. The regional bureaus and country desks tend to advocate sales to "their" countries.<sup>33</sup> Apart from the regional bureaus and country desks, the State Department has traditionally been more inclined to arms control than other departments involved in U.S. foreign policy. However, because of the Department's small size in budget and staff compared with the Department of Defense, and because more power over foreign policy was from the 1960s situated in the White House and especially with the National Security Adviser and his staff, the State Department is often unable to influence arms transfer decisions in the way intended by regulations. When under pressure from the Department of Defense or the National Security Council staff, the State Department often has to decide favorably on arms transfers it might otherwise oppose.

The Department of State retains formal authority in all U.S. arms transfer decisions. In practice, however, this authority is shared with the Department of Defense, which during Carter's Presidency was led by Harold Brown. In addition to having influence over decisions, the Defense Department also controls the day-to-day management of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 89. See also "Interview with Leslie Gelb," *Arms Control Today*, No. 8, September 1980, p. 6. Gelb said that, unlike the regional bureaus, 'the functional bureaus have the responsibility of implementing more general policies, and are often in the position of having to insist on actions that have made for more difficulties in bilateral relations.'

arms transfers. The Department of Defense is traditionally supportive towards arms transfers and not inclined to show restraint.<sup>34</sup>

Other governmental bodies, such as the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA),<sup>35</sup> the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Treasury Department, the National Security Council (NSC), the Agency for International Development (AID), and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), are also involved in U.S. arms transfer decisions. These departments and agencies are generally consulted for review and opinions only in the case of controversial arms requests, or if they have special competence regarding specific sales. Most important for the subject of this thesis is ACDA. Its statutory role was to function as an advisory body for the legislative and the executive branches of the government and to analyze the arms control impacts of individual arms sales proposals on the country or region in question. Many in the national security bureaucracy and in Congress viewed ACDA with skepticism. According to its director during the first two years of Carter's Presidency, Paul Warnke, ACDA was considered by many in Washington 'as an enemy of efforts to keep America strong.'<sup>36</sup>

### **The Legislative Branch**

While the Executive Branch is responsible for setting the policy platform guiding the arms transfer policy and management of the process, Congress plays an active part in decisions on individual arms transfer requests. Just as the diverse arms transfer programs are subject to various laws, they are also subject to differing requirements concerning congressional authorization.

From the mid-1960s, partly as a result of the Vietnam War, the contest between Capitol Hill and the President over U.S. foreign policy grew sharper. It resulted in Congress gaining more control over foreign policy decisions, and arms transfers were one of the areas where Congress increased its power during the 1970s.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Duncan L. Clarke, *Politics and Arms Control: The Role and Effectiveness of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency*, London, 1979, 89.

<sup>35</sup> ACDA was terminated in 1998, and replaced by the Bureau of Arms Control, which in contrast to ACDA is under direct control of the Secretary of State.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Warnke, "Preface," in Hans G. Brauch and Duncan L. Clarke, eds., *Decisionmaking for Arms Limitation: Assessments and Prospects*, Cambridge, 1983, p. XV.

<sup>37</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Changing Perspectives on U.S. Arms Transfer Policy*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 6.

Arms transfer policy had not been a controversial aspect of U.S. foreign policy from the end of World War II until the 1960s. However, from the mid-1960s, the rise in U.S. exports to Third World countries caused widespread congressional concern, and a large group of lawmakers felt that the Executive Branch had lost control over the nation's arms transfer policy. These critics claimed that the arms transfer policy was incoherent; and that arms were being pushed overseas in disregard of their negative effects on the recipient countries and global stability; and that the policy was heavily influenced by the interests of the defense industry, whose sole objective was financial gain. They demanded stricter laws and a stronger voice for Congress over arms transfer programs. These were mostly Democrats, but there were also Republicans eager to increase congressional control over foreign policy.

The first major victory for Congress in its quest for more control over arms transfers came in 1974, with the passing of the Nelson Amendment<sup>38</sup> to the Foreign Military Sales Act. This Amendment provided Congress with twenty days after a presidential notification, in which to review and if necessary block U.S. government arms sales in excess of \$25 million for major defense equipment<sup>39</sup> through a concurrent resolution of disapproval (disapproval by majorities in both houses of Congress). Congressional concern over U.S. arms export policy further increased during the next two years, culminating in the passing of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976. This Act provided the Congress increased oversight over and a more direct role in arms transfer decisions. The most significant change in the new Act was the enhanced right for Congress to control individual sales. The revised veto power lengthened the time Congress could use to block sales to 30 days. Further, it required that all sales over \$25 million to non-NATO members must be made within a government program rather than on a commercial basis.<sup>40</sup>

Some scholars have argued that the 1976 Act did not significantly provide Congress with better tools for controlling U.S. arms transfers, and that its authority over sales decisions were 'more formal than real.'<sup>41</sup> Normally, major arms deals take years to

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<sup>38</sup> Introduced by Senator Gaylord Nelson, Democrat of Wisconsin.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. weapons systems for export were classified according to grade of technological sophistication, lethality, to what degree it was defensive or offensive, research and development costs etc. Major defense equipment ranged from light infantry weapons to warships and aircraft.

<sup>40</sup> A 1981 amendment to the AECA removed the upper dollar limit on commercial sales.

<sup>41</sup> McKinley and Mughan, *Aid and Arms to the Third World*, p. 47. See also Holland, "The Myth of Arms Restraint," pp. 9842-9843.

negotiate. Because Congress entered the arms transfer decisions late in the process, after the Executive Branch had approved a sale and a *de facto* commitment had been made, Congress could not use its veto power without the risk of harming U.S. relations with the prospective recipient. In addition, the legislators often found themselves under heavy pressure from the defense industry and its constituencies not to block a sale.<sup>42</sup> This pressure was especially heavy for representatives from states with large-scale defense production. Further, the 1976 Arms Export Act included a provision for presidential authority to waive the right of Congress to veto sales if the President declared that an emergency existed and that the national security interests of the U.S.A. were endangered. In addition, the short period of 30 calendar days from the time when Congress was notified of a proposed sale and to when it had to decide whether or not to block it, would seldom be enough to arrange a majority behind a veto in both Houses. Although several sales agreements have in fact been modified as a result of Congressional action (as will be shown in the case study on Iran), these factors help explain why Congress has to this day never used its authority to stop a sale. However, even if Congress' possibilities to block a sale after it has been approved by the Executive are limited, the fact that the Legislative has such an authority may have stopped the Executive Branch from agreeing to certain sales in light of probable defeat in Congress.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these obstacles to legislative action, Congress had nevertheless managed to get some power over the arms transfer policy. When Carter took office he faced an assertive Democrat-controlled Congress committed to arms transfer control. That meant that if the new administration was serious in its efforts at restraining arms transfers, it could expect support from Capitol Hill. However, for the policy to succeed, it would need the full support of the President in the face of pressure from arms transfer advocates in Congress, the bureaucracy, and powerful forces within the Pentagon and the State Department.

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<sup>42</sup> McKinley and Mughan, *Aid and Arms to the Third World*, p. 37.

<sup>43</sup> Brzoska and Ohlson, *Arms Transfers to the Third World*, p. 52.

## Chapter 2

# Carter's Arms Transfer Policy

*The virtually unrestrained spread of conventional weaponry threatens stability in every region of the world. [...] Because of the threat to world peace embodied in this spiralling [sic.] arms traffic and because of the special responsibilities we bear as the largest arms seller, I believe that the United States must take steps to restrain its arms transfers.<sup>1</sup>*

Jimmy Carter made his first public comments on conventional arms transfers during a press conference in his hometown, Plains, Georgia, in July 1976. He promised that, if elected, he would reduce U.S. arms transfers, and pursue multilateral cooperation on transfer restraint.<sup>2</sup> On May 19, 1977, four months after his inauguration, he announced the new administration's arms transfer policy.

This chapter provides the basis for the discussions of the thesis. It gives an introduction to the development of what became the arms transfer policy of the Carter Administration, and presents how the policy was received in policy circles. Further, it examines the administration's motives for developing the new policy.

## The origin of the policy

Shortly after taking office, Carter started to work on his election promise. At the first National Security Meeting, on January 26, 1977, he ordered a Presidential Review Memorandum on U.S. policy on international transfers of conventional weapons, and suspended all new arms transfer negotiations pending the period of the review process.<sup>3</sup> The study group was chaired by the Department of State and was composed of representations from nine government agencies. Because of a tight schedule as well as disagreement within the group over how the arms transfer policy should be revised and how the arms transfer decision-making process should be reorganized, the review was not finished until April 7, 1977, almost one month past the original deadline. After the National Security Council had evaluated and made some modifications to the study, it was discussed with the House International Committee

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter, 1981*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

<sup>2</sup> Press Briefing at Plains, Georgia, July 29, 1976. *The Presidential Campaign 1976, Volume One, Part One, Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1978, pp. 374–376.

<sup>3</sup> Presidential Review Memorandum 12 (secret), January 19, 1977, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], Vertical Files, Presidential Review Memoranda, "Presidential Review Memoranda 11–35" folder; and President's Reorganization Project, June 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, James T. McIntyre Collection, Box 10, "President's Reorganization Project – Decision Analysis Report, 6/77" folder.

and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which resulted in further adjustments.<sup>4</sup> On May 13, 1977, the new guidelines were finally signed into Presidential Directive 13 (PD-13), and the policy was publicly announced six days later.

## Presidential Directive 13

Although Presidential Directive 13 was moderate compared to Carter's campaign rhetoric, it provided the most restrictive U.S. arms transfer policy regulations since the country became a major arms exporter during World War II.<sup>5</sup>

PD-13 was a three-page document, consisting of some general comments on the administration's objectives and a set of six quantitative and qualitative control mechanisms planned to guide the Executive Branch in its decision-making on arms transfers.<sup>6</sup> The main objectives of the controls were to increase U.S. self-restraint on arms transfers to Third World countries and 'to reduce the volume and sophistication of armaments going to trouble spots.'<sup>7</sup> In his official statement on the policy, the President promised that foreign policy problems would be approached by other means than arms sales, and that arms transfers would be considered an 'exceptional foreign policy implement.' Further, he assured that 'the burden of persuasion will be on those who favor a particular sale rather than on those who oppose it.'<sup>8</sup>

The controls were primarily aimed at arms exports to developing countries, and were not to be applied to the countries with which the U.S.A. had 'major defense treaties': these were the fourteen NATO countries, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.<sup>9</sup> Israel was not a formal defense treaty partner, and was therefore not included among the non-exempt countries. Considerable pressure, however, both from within the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> There had been efforts to restrain U.S. arms transfers before World War II. However, because the U.S.A. had been a minor arms exporter compared to countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom, it is not instructive to compare Carter's policy with U.S. arms transfer policy preceding 1945. For overviews on international arms transfers prior to 1945, see: Keith Krause, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 34–80; Andrew J. Pierre, ed., *Arms Transfers and American Foreign Policy*, New York, 1979, pp. 1–25; and Anthony Sampson, *The Arms Bazaar*, New York, 1977, pp. 35–115.

<sup>6</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1–20" folder.

<sup>7</sup> Statement by the Director of the State Department Office of Politico-Military Affairs, Leslie Gelb. *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations of the Senate*, February 1 and 2, 1978, Washington D.C., 1978., p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 931.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

administration (represented especially by the President's domestic policy adviser Stuart Eizenstat and Vice President Walter Mondale), and outside, from supporters of Israel in Congress and Jewish lobbying organizations,<sup>10</sup> resulted in Israel being placed in an in-between position. A compromise was reached, and Carter promised to 'honor our historic responsibilities to assure the security of the State of Israel.'<sup>11</sup> PD-13 did not specify how this would affect arms transfers toward the country, but the NSC official responsible for global issues,<sup>12</sup> Jessica Tuchman Matthews, told the *New York Times* that Israel would be 'largely exempt' from the policy.<sup>13</sup> To maintain the impression of the U.S.A. as a reliable partner, the policy would not have retroactive force: thus, sales negotiated by previous administrations but not yet contracted would be concluded.<sup>14</sup>

## **Control 1 – The ceiling**

In control 1, the administration committed itself to gradually reducing the dollar volume of U.S. arms transfers through annual reductions based on the previous year's total.

The U.S. Government had never before operated with any ceiling of this sort, but the idea was not an innovation. During discussions between Congress and the Ford Administration over new arms transfer regulations in 1976, the House Foreign Affairs Committee had proposed a \$9 billion ceiling on arms sales. This provision had, however, been vetoed by the President, who argued that a ceiling would not be a proper tool to manage arms transfers.<sup>15</sup>

The new control included several exceptions. Sales to the seventeen aforementioned exempt countries would not be included under the ceiling. Transfer agreements to these countries accounted for approximately 15 percent of fiscal year (FY) 1977

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<sup>10</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, April 29, 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President, 1-15: 2/77-6/77" folder; and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 - 1981*, New York, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.

<sup>12</sup> "Global" issues included: arms transfers, security assistance, chemical warfare, nonproliferation and nuclear cooperation, human rights and refugees.

<sup>13</sup> "Broad Carter Policy will Restrict Sales of Weapons Abroad," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1977, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> According to *The New York Times*, these were valued at approximately \$32 billion. Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Changing Perspectives on U.S. Arms Transfer Policy*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 9.

totals.<sup>16</sup> The ceiling would cover only government-initiated transfers, not commercial sales negotiated by private U.S. corporations. According to Carter, commercial sales, which in FY 1977 accounted for 15 percent of total U.S. arms transfers,<sup>17</sup> were 'already significantly restrained by existing legislation and Executive branch policy.'<sup>18</sup> Further, the ceiling did not cover military services, such as training, construction, technical assistance and handling and transportation of military equipment. These sales reached \$2.8 billion in FY 1978, or approximately 20 percent of total sales.<sup>19</sup> This meant, for example, that construction sales to Saudi Arabia would not be counted under the ceiling, even if such sales greatly increased the country's military power. Saudi Arabia alone purchased almost \$500 million worth of construction services in FY 1976, and had contracted for billions more.<sup>20</sup>

In order not to disrupt arms sales commitments already made, or cause friction in bilateral relations with arms recipients, the ceiling would relate to agreements rather than to actual deliveries. This also made sense because arms were often not shipped until years after the sales agreements had been made. Thus, using statistics on deliveries would not necessarily reflect the volume of sale for that particular year.

The FY 1977 total was set as the base year, and FY 1978 would be the first year with a ceiling. The fact that the arms sales figure for FY 1977 was higher than FY 1976 led the press to speculate that arms sales agreements were intensified during Carter's first year, to make it easier to stay below the ceiling in the following year.<sup>21</sup> Because U.S. arms transfer statistics for the period do not provide details on when in a given year arms agreements were signed, this suspicion cannot be verified. However, there are no indications that the administration did anything to boost sales agreements

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<sup>16</sup> Author's calculations. In 1977, the U.S.A. made transfer agreements under the Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance programs worth approximately \$1.3 billion to the exempt countries, while global transfers reached \$8.5 billion. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, pp. 1–6; and 35–38.

<sup>17</sup> Author's calculations. In 1977, the U.S. Government granted approximately \$1.5 billion worth of commercial sales licenses. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.

<sup>19</sup> Jo L. Husbands, "The Arms Connection: Jimmy Carter and the Politics of Military Exports," in Cindy Cannizzo, ed., *The Gun Merchants: Politics and Policies of the Major Suppliers*, New York, 1980, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, pp. 15–16

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, May 26, 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President, 1–15: 2/77–6/77" folder.



from its inauguration in January 1977 to the end of FY 1977 on 30 September. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski told Carter that the administration had approved fewer arms transfer applications in this period than Ford had done during the same period in 1976.<sup>22</sup> Because this was said in a secret internal memorandum, there is no reason to distrust Brzezinski on this account. Brzezinski further told the President that the high dollar volume of FY 1977 was a consequence of \$6 billion in sales agreed to in the last year of the Ford Administration but not yet signed into letters of offer.<sup>23</sup> Many of the most controversial arms transfer decisions made by the Carter Administration would in fact be arms transactions that had been negotiated under Presidents Nixon and Ford, such as promises of major arms sales to Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

On February 1, 1978, the President announced the administration's first ceiling, and promised to reduce the dollar volume of U.S. arms transfers to non-exempt countries from \$9.3 billion in FY 1977 to \$8.54 billion in FY 1978.<sup>24</sup> This was an 8 percent reduction, adjusted for inflation. According to Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Lucy Wilson Benson, more than half of the \$8.54 billion had already been decided on.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the administration was left with some \$4 billion in new arms sales. On November 29, 1978, the administration committed itself to a further 8 percent reduction in constant dollars, and assured that the United States would not export more than \$8.43 billion worth of military material in FY 1979.<sup>26</sup>

Apart from aspiring to reduce the volume of U.S. arms sales, the ceiling was projected to increase decision-makers' control and planning over transfers and impose an order of priority among arms transfer requests. In addition it was meant to demonstrate to the public and to foreign producers and recipients that the Carter Administration was serious in its endeavor to reduce U.S. arms exports and thus strengthen its efforts at negotiating multilateral arms transfer restraint.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 11, 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President, 31-41: 10/77-1/78" folder.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) annual report 1978, May 1979, JCL, White House Central Files [henceforth WHCF], FG-209, "FG 264, 1/1/79-5/31/79" folder.

<sup>25</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> ACDA annual report 1978.

<sup>27</sup> Lucy W. Benson, "Turning the Arms Supertanker: Arms Transfer Restraint," *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1979, p. 8.

From the outset, the ceiling was the most discussed and among critics the most unpopular part of the new policy. Arms control activists, whose expectations had been raised by campaign rhetoric, and had anticipated large reductions in U.S. arms transfers, were disappointed by the many exceptions and the modest cuts. Arms transfer advocates on Capitol Hill argued that the ceiling conformed 'neither to political nor military realities, nor to a sensible, effective arms control policy.'<sup>28</sup> Some observers – members of the aerospace industry in particular – also felt the ceiling was artificial and made the decision-makers focus more on total sales than on the consequences of individual transactions, and judge sales valid or invalid just because they were above a certain total.<sup>29</sup> The president of the conservative American League for International Security Assistance, Joseph Karth, complained that the ceiling was 'analogous to putting oneself in a straightjacket and then [*sic*] complaining about one's lack of flexibility to deal with a variety of situations.'<sup>30</sup> Benson, however, countered that 'a ceiling is essential as a management tool to focus bureaucratic attention on the new policy and to force the decision-making machinery and the people who manage that machinery to think and act in new ways [and] a ceiling is no more arbitrary than a budget.'<sup>31</sup> Chairman of the House Committee on International Relations, Clement Zablocki (Democrat, Wisconsin) expressed a common skepticism when he questioned the practicality of the ceiling and raised the prospect that it would only hurt the smaller and less strategically important countries, who would have to scramble for the remaining sales after the strategically important countries had got theirs. Publicly, administration officials denied that would be the result. However, internal White House documents show that this was recognized as a possible unfortunate side effect.<sup>32</sup> Several of the case studies in this thesis will discuss this aspect of the policy.

According to Benson, the ceiling was not the most important part of the arms transfer policy, but it served as the 'most ambitious reflection of the policy's intent.'<sup>33</sup> Evaluation of the ceiling would also be the public's easiest means to judge how the

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<sup>28</sup> Letter (executive), Warren G. Magnuson et al. to the President, October 10, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO 71, 1/20/77 – 1/20/81" folder.

<sup>29</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> Letter (executive), Joseph E. Karth to Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 13, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-27, "FO 3-2, 6/15/78 – 8/20/78" folder.

<sup>31</sup> Benson, "Turning the Arms Supertanker," pp. 9–10.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 3, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 42, "Weekly Reports to the President, 71–81: 9/78–12/78" folder.

<sup>33</sup> Benson, "Turning the Arms Supertanker," p. 11.

restraint policy was implemented. Carter acknowledged that non-compliance with it would result in loss of prestige and be a serious blow to the policy. In a May 1978 handwritten note to National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Carter demanded that they 'not fail to meet my Commitment to cut back at least 8% on arms sales,' as that would result in embarrassment for him and the administration.<sup>34</sup>

## **Control 2 – Restriction on sale of sophisticated weapons**

Control 2 placed restrictions on the sophistication of military equipment for export. Carter promised that the U.S.A. would not 'be the first supplier to introduce into a region newly developed, advanced weapons systems which would create a new or significantly higher combat capability.'<sup>35</sup> This control also prohibited the 'sale or coproduction of newly-developed advanced weapons systems [...] until the systems are operationally deployed with US forces.'<sup>36</sup> In addition, the U.S.A. would not transfer advanced technology if it required 'the presence in country of large numbers of Americans for long periods of time.'<sup>37</sup>

As mentioned in chapter 1, the quality of U.S. arms sold to Third World countries increased radically during the 1960s and early 1970s. From selling and donating mostly outdated, excess defense articles to developing countries, the U.S.A. had by Carter's inauguration begun transferring highly advanced, modern weapons. This increase in the sophistication of exported arms was one of the elements in U.S. arms transfer policy that had caused most concern and criticism.<sup>38</sup> Previous administrations had restricted transfers of sophisticated weapons to selected regions: thus the novelty of this control was its global application.<sup>39</sup>

The main exception to control 2 was the President's right to waive it if he determined 'that countries friendly to the United States must depend on advanced weaponry to

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<sup>34</sup> Emphasis in original. Memorandum (confidential), Warren Christopher to the President, May 5, 1978, JCL, Staff Offices, Office of Staff Secretary, Handwriting File, Box 86, "5/20/78" folder.

<sup>35</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.

<sup>36</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Michael T. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, Austin, TX, 1984, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*, Ipswich, 1995, p. 90.

offset quantitative or other disadvantages in order to maintain a regional balance.<sup>40</sup> The control included some ambiguity connected with vague terminology. PD-13 did not specify what represented a “significantly higher combat capability,” or what constituted a “region.” This looseness provided Carter with possible escape routes if he should want to export arms opposed to the spirit of the policy. The administration recognized the lack of concrete definitions in this guideline, and settled for a case-by-case evaluation on when particular weapons systems would significantly improve a country’s combat capability. Scholars have also criticized the Carter Administration for not having defined the term “newly developed.”<sup>41</sup> This phrase, however, was defined as ‘a weapons system which has not yet been operationally deployed with U.S. forces,’ in a July 1977 State Department memorandum sent out to all agencies involved in the decision-making on arms transfers.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding this effort by the State Department, the uncertainty over the definitions in control 2 soon raised discussions within the Executive Branch. When a Singaporean request to purchase I-Hawk missiles was up for discussion in October 1977, the State Department opposed it on the grounds that this was a ‘newly developed advanced system,’ while the Pentagon, which supported the sale, argued that it could not be regarded as such because it was ten years old.<sup>43</sup> This disagreement was settled, in the favor of the Defense Department, without much controversy. However, this dispute was not a unique episode, and throughout Carter’s Presidency there would be disagreements within the administration over how to interpret the controls of PD-13.

The decision-makers on arms transfers considered this control as the most important component of the qualitative controls.<sup>44</sup> Its purpose was to prevent U.S. arms transfers from resulting in regional arms races. The promise not to sell weapons not yet in use by U.S. forces would prevent export of arms motivated by lowering Pentagon procurement costs, which previous administrations had frequently been criticized for doing. Thus, Carter signaled that the new arms sales policy would not be affected by economic considerations.

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<sup>40</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, “Presidential Directives 1–20” folder.

<sup>41</sup> See Graham Kearns, *Arms for the Poor: President Carter’s Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*, Canberra, 1980, p. 18; and Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum, Lucy Wilson Benson to Leslie Gelb et al., 22 July 1977, in *Review of the President’s Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum (secret), Mike Armacost to Zbigniew Brzezinski, October 6, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Box 5, “Armacost Chron File, 10/1–14/77” folder.

<sup>44</sup> *U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, A Report to the Senate From the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 8.

### **Control 3 – Ban on production of arms for export only**

Control 3 specified that transfers of 'advanced weapons systems developed or significantly modified solely for export' would be prohibited to non-exempt countries.<sup>45</sup>

This control was an innovation. Weapons produced solely for export were almost always inferior to and less expensive than weapons produced for U.S. forces. To meet purchasing countries' desires for weapons systems and to protect secret technology, previous post-World War II administrations had supported the defense industries' development of such arms.<sup>46</sup> Most important among the weapons produced for export only were various models of the Northrop F-5 fighter aircraft which had been exported to thirty countries worldwide, and were produced under license in three countries.<sup>47</sup> However, by 1977, the F-5 was getting outdated. The industry was planning to design a new aircraft for export with capabilities between the F-5 and first-line fighters such as F-15, F-16 and F-18.<sup>48</sup>

As with control 2, this control also contained some vague terminology. There was no definition or example of which technical criteria "significant modifications" indicated. In fact, most of the advanced weapons systems exported by the U.S.A. had been modified, either to secure sensitive technology or to meet the recipients' individual defense needs. However, an internal administration memorandum defined this control to include any weapons system 'which was not developed for the U.S. armed forces and would not be produced if it could not be exported.'<sup>49</sup> But still the control was left open for interpretation as to how much a weapons system could be modified before export would be prohibited.

The rationale behind this control was to reduce the U.S. defense industries' incentive to design and produce weapons intended exclusively for the foreign market. However, implementation of control 3 could obstruct the goals of control 2 – to restrain the spread of sophisticated weapons. If there were no weapons produced solely for

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<sup>45</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>46</sup> Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 91.

<sup>47</sup> The F-5 was produced under license in Taiwan, Canada and Spain. Tom Gervasi, *The Arsenal of Democracy: American Weapons Available for Export*, New York, 1977, pp. 92-95.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 60.

<sup>49</sup> Memorandum, Lucy Wilson Benson to Leslie Gelb et al., July 22, 1977, in *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 72.

export, the only arms available for transfer would be the advanced equipment used by U.S. forces. The control was naturally unpopular with the defense industry which, prohibited from exporting its most sophisticated arms because of control 2, and not allowed to produce less advanced weaponry for overseas sale, was afraid of losing export shares to other suppliers.

## **Control 4 – Restriction on co-production**

Control 4 prohibited 'coproduction of significant weapons, equipment, or major components.'<sup>50</sup>

The term 'technology transfers' is often used to describe this kind of transaction. It includes blueprints, technical data, components, machine tools, manufacturing know-how, machines and complete factories for the assembly of weapons systems.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1970s, technology transfers became an important part of the global arms market as more countries sought to establish high-technology production capabilities. Arms importers frequently insisted that co-production arrangements should accompany arms purchases. This enabled more and more Third World countries to produce military equipment, both for domestic use and for export. Post-World War II Presidents had supported co-production and licensing arrangements. From 1956 to 1976, the U.S. Government approved 65 co-production applications, and exported knowledge and equipment for the production of weapons systems such as TOW (Tube-launched, optically-guided, wire-controlled), HAWK and Maverick missiles; F-4 and F-5 fighter aircraft; and military helicopters.<sup>52</sup> Licenses for the production of U.S.-

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<sup>50</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>51</sup> The official definition of co-production in U.S. laws governing arms transactions was: All transfers made 'either directly through the FMS program, or indirectly through specific licensing arrangements by designated commercial firms, enables an eligible foreign government, international organization or designated commercial producer to acquire the "know-how" to manufacture or assemble, repair, maintain, and operate, in whole or part, a specific weapon, communication or support system, or an individual military item.' Letter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Assistance to Lee Hamilton, December 9, 1977. Letter found in *Congressional Record – House of Representatives*, March 14, 1977, p. 2044. For a comprehensive analysis of international technology transfers, see Michael T. Klare, "The Unnoticed Arms Trade: Exports of Conventional Arms-Making Technology," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Fall 1983, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> *The Congressional Record – House of Representatives*, March 14 1978, pp. 2044-2049; and Congressional Research Service, *Arms Transfer Policy: Report to Congress for use of Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate*, Washington D.C., 1977, p. 23.

origin weapons abroad were granted even more frequently. In the period 1974–77, the Executive Branch approved some 600 license requests.

Also this new control included important exceptions and vague terminology. It did not prohibit all co-production, and stated that 'a limited class of items will be considered for coproduction arrangements, but with restrictions on third-country exports, since these arrangements are intended primarily for the coproducer's requirements.'<sup>53</sup> In addition, the restriction would not cover the 'assembly of subcomponents and the fabrication of high-turnover spare parts.'<sup>54</sup> As in controls 2 and 3, the word "significant" was not defined in the policy document. However, the aforementioned internal memorandum defined "significant weapons" in this control as being the same as the weapons listed in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) as 'significant combat equipment or major components thereof.'<sup>55</sup>

Thus, it should have been unproblematic for the decision-makers to decide which weapons were covered by control 4. However, the term caused internal discussions in the administration shortly after the policy was announced. The Department of State on the one hand and the Department of Defense and the National Security Council staff on the other hand differed as to whether the M-16 rifle and the M-203 grenade launcher, requested for co-production by Indonesia and Singapore respectively, should be termed significant or not.<sup>56</sup> While State labeled both weapons systems 'significant weapons equipment' because they were designated as such in ITAR, Mike Armacost of the NSC staff termed both 'minor league weapons,' and called for a 'clear-cut definition,' to prevent future complications.<sup>57</sup> There are no available records to show that any clear-cut definition was developed, but licenses were granted for the production of small arms, such as the M-16 and M-203, and the interpretation of the definition did not cause any further disputes.

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<sup>53</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.

<sup>54</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1–20" folder.

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum, Lucy Wilson Benson to Leslie Gelb et al., July 22, 1977, in *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 72.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum (secret), Mike Armacost to Zbigniew Brzezinski, October 21, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Box 5, "Armacost Chron File 10/1–14/77" folder; and memorandum (secret), Mike Armacost to Zbigniew Brzezinski, October 6, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Box 5, "Armacost Chron File, 10/1–14/77" folder.

<sup>57</sup> Note (confidential), Mike Armacost to Bob Kimmitt, June 30, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, "Armacost Chron File 6/28–30/77" folder.

Control 4 aimed at restraining the diffusion of sensitive technology. Carter wanted to reduce technology transfers because they were irreversible and because they increased the number of arms-producing countries, thus raising the level of global armaments.

### **Control 5 – Prohibition on third-country transfers**

Control 5 specified that the U.S. government, 'as a condition of sale for certain weapons, equipment, or major components, may stipulate that the US will not entertain any requests for re-transfers.'<sup>58</sup>

All transactions of U.S. weaponry contracted the recipient not to re-transfer the equipment without prior U.S. consent. Thus, this control was not new, but it strengthened the provisions in the 1976 Arms Export Control Act, under which 'approval of retransfers should be given only if the United States would be willing to make a comparable direct sale.'<sup>59</sup> Because this was not a new stipulation, the fact that it was incorporated it into PD-13 brought expectations that Carter would halt arms transfers to the countries which broke it.<sup>60</sup>

As with the other measures, control 5 was also vague. It did not specify what "certain weapons, equipment and major components" included. Therefore, it was not clear if implementing the control would result in denials of all re-transfer requests, or if it would affect certain items only.

Control 5 intended to prevent U.S. arms from being diverted through re-transfers by the original recipients. According to Carter, part of the reason for including the control in PD-13 was to establish 'at the outset that the United States will not entertain such requests,' to 'avoid unnecessary bilateral friction caused by later denials.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1–20" folder.

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jessica Tuchman and Les Denend to Zbigniew Brzezinski, February 15, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 28, "Meetings—SCC 59: 2/21/78" folder; and *U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, A Report to the Senate From the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> Max Holland, "The Myth of Arms Restraint," *Congressional Record – Senate*, July 9, 1979, p. 8941.

<sup>61</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.



## Control 6 – Restriction on promotional activity

Control 6 curtailed the marketing activities of U.S. arms manufacturers. It required U.S. defense firms to gain prior authorization by the Department of State 'before a proposal or presentation is made designed to constitute a basis for a decision to purchase significant combat equipment valued at \$7 million or more.'<sup>62</sup> The control also banned arms promotion by U.S. Embassy personnel and military missions. The provisions set out in control 6 were incorporated as an amendment to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations in August 1977, thus becoming part of the laws governing U.S. arms transfers.

On 20 May 1977, the day after Carter publicly announced the new arms transfer policy, instructions were sent to all U.S. government representatives abroad informing about the new regulations. The letter instructed U.S. Embassies and military representatives not to:

*...in conversation or correspondence with foreign officials encourage their interest in U.S. defense articles, services, or coproduction. [...] In order to prevent initiation and maturing of arms sales proposals outside of established policy considerations, request you ensure that all elements of the mission and official visitors understand that they should not convey to host government officials information, including planning data, which might elicit or influence a foreign request to purchase significant combat equipment unless such an approach has been fully approved by Executive Branch.*<sup>63</sup>

In this control, Carter was responding to criticism from Congress and groups within the foreign affairs bureaucracy that Military Advisory Groups (MAAGs)<sup>64</sup> were functioning as arms salesmen.<sup>65</sup> Control 6 was extremely unpopular with the U.S. defense industry, which was afraid of losing out in the competition with other suppliers who were not restrained in their marketing activities.

This control was part of Carter's design to emphasize foreign and security policy, rather than economic factors, in deciding on arms sales requests. Further, he sought to channel all arms requests through diplomatic channels,<sup>66</sup> and 'improve the ability of

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<sup>62</sup> Letter (executive), Frank Moore to George Mahon, September 15, 1977, JCL, WHCF, ND-49, "ND 18, 9/1/77 – 9/30/77," folder.

<sup>63</sup> Department of State, *Munitions Control Newsletter*, No. 47, October 1977.

<sup>64</sup> MAAGs were U.S. security assistance groups stationed in all countries in which the United States had important security interests; they were to advise on military matters.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, David J. Louscher and Michael D. Salomon "Growing Dilemmas for the Management of Arms Sales," *Armed Forces and Society*, Fall 1979, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Alan Cranston, undated, JCL, WHCF, FO-30 "FO 3-2/CO 71, 1/20/77 – 1/20/81" folder.

the State Department to control the export of defense articles and defense services.<sup>67</sup> It was believed that this measure would not only reduce U.S. arms sales, but also improve the Executive Branch's evaluation of possible sales before being confronted with requests resulting from promotional activity. Barry Blechman, Assistant Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, argued before Congress that promotional activities by U.S. arms salesmen often resulted in requests, and 'once a request is made it is politically difficult to turn it down,' because rejections could result in deterioration of bilateral relations.<sup>68</sup>

## **Human rights and economic conditions of recipients**

In addition to the six controls, PD-13 included an assurance that arms transfer programs would be managed 'in a manner which will promote and advance respect for human rights in recipient countries.'<sup>69</sup> The administration also committed itself to 'assess the economic impact of arms transfers to those less developed countries receiving U.S. economic assistance.'<sup>70</sup>

In addition to being personally concerned about global human rights, Carter was here responding to the growing Congressional focus on human rights.<sup>71</sup> Linking the transfer of military material and services with human rights was by nothing new in U.S. policy. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 directed the President to conduct government security assistance programs 'in a manner which will promote and advance human rights and avoid identification of the United States, through such programs, with governments which deny to their people internationally recognized human rights.'<sup>72</sup> Section 502B of the 1976 Arms Export Control Act strengthened the provision, and said that unless extraordinary circumstances justify it 'no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of

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<sup>67</sup> Letter (executive), Frank Moore to George Mahon, September 15, 1977, JCL, WHCF, ND-49, "ND 18, 9/1/77 - 9/30/77," folder.

<sup>68</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>70</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.

<sup>71</sup> The human rights policy was set forth in a separate Presidential Directive. Presidential Directive 30 (secret), February 17, 1978, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 21-40" folder.

<sup>72</sup> Congressional Research Service, *United States Arms Transfer and Security Assistance Programs*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 17.

gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.<sup>73</sup> Congress had also forced through arms sales sanctions to individual countries because of human rights violations – cutting off of all arms transfers to Chile in 1974 and Uruguay in 1976, and limiting transfers to South Korea in 1976.<sup>74</sup>

Carter's promise to consider the economic situations of the arms receiving countries also followed up on existing legislation. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, specified that countries which stalled their own economic development because of weapons purchases would suffer aid cuts; and the Foreign Military Sales Act of 1968 prohibited sales of sophisticated weapons to underdeveloped countries.<sup>75</sup>

However, as with all the control in PD-13, these promises could be ignored by the President if U.S. security interests were perceived to be threatened.

## **Multilateral efforts**

In announcing the new policy, Carter made it clear that 'unilateral restraint can have only limited effectiveness without multilateral cooperation.'<sup>76</sup> Unilateral restraint was intended to set an example and show the administration's seriousness, encouraging – one hoped – other arms producers to reduce their exports. The Carter Administration's diplomatic efforts at reaching multilateral agreements on arms sale restraint will be dealt with in chapter 3.

## **Reorganization of the decision-making process**

One of the most criticized elements of U.S. arms sales policy concerned the management and coordination systems for arms transfer decisions. An important component of the Carter Administration's restraint effort aimed at improving this process. The administration recognized that it would be impossible to force through implementation of the policy in the bureaucracy unless instituting new control and coordinating measures and improving old ones. Previous routines were changed and new ones added for a more systematic decision-making process that was believed to ensure that all arms sales would be subject to rigorous review procedures.

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<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Paul L. Ferrari, Jeffrey W. Knopf, and Raúl L. Madrid, *US Arms Exports: Policies and Contractors*, Washington D.C., 1987, p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> Holland, "The Myth of Arms Restraint," p. 8939.

<sup>75</sup> Michael T. Klare, "US policy on arms transfers to the Third World," in Thomas Ohlson, ed., *Arms Transfer Limitations and Third World Security*, Oxford, 1988, p. 81.

<sup>76</sup> PD-13 (secret), 13 May 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

The rationalization effort of the arms sales management would be done by:

- Providing 'the Secretary of State with a reliable mechanism for carrying out his responsibility for continuous supervision and general direction of the country's arms transfer activity;'
- ensuring 'that all the agencies involved in the arms transfer business are aware of the provisions and requirements of the policy and that they apply them consistently;' and
- setting 'out orderly procedures for handling the day-to-day arms transfer operations for reconciling policy differences, and for making decisions.'<sup>77</sup>

The administration also introduced a new federal body, the inter-agency Arms Export Control Board (AECB), to assist in the development of a new arms transfer management system, oversee implementation of PD-13 and increase coordination between all the security assistance programs. The Board replaced the Security Assistance Program Review Committee (SAPRC), which had monitored all government grants of military equipment and services. In addition to continuing this work, the AECB would also be involved in all arms sales programs and weapons export control issues.<sup>78</sup> AECB did not have any decision-making authority: it was solely an advisory body with policy planning and review functions. The AECB was chaired by the Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, Lucy W. Benson, and it included members representing all the nine federal agencies involved in military sales and security assistance.<sup>79</sup> Not to upset the turf-conscious federal agencies, the State Department promised that 'nothing in this new arrangement will increase or limit existing responsibilities or authority of any Executive Branch agency or official.'<sup>80</sup> This shows that from the start, it was clear that AECB would not have much authority. However, to ensure some bureaucratic muscle for the new body, members attending the meetings would be at Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary level, and the

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<sup>77</sup> Statement by Benson. *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum, Lucy Wilson Benson to Leslie Gelb et al., 22 July 1977, in *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 72.

<sup>79</sup> The agencies represented: the State, Defense and Treasury Departments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Agency for International Development, and the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Commerce. Representatives of other agencies would be invited when matters relevant to them were under consideration.

<sup>80</sup> Memorandum, Lucy Wilson Benson to Leslie Gelb et al., 22 July 1977, in *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 72.

opinions should reflect the positions of agencies rather than sub-agencies.<sup>81</sup> The Board was divided into eight working groups.<sup>82</sup> Six of these were chaired by Leslie Gelb, the Department of State's Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, until he was replaced by Reginald Bartholomew in April 1979, who was also the deputy chairman of the Board. Thus, the creation of the AECB can be seen as one of the methods used to increase the State Department's control over arms sales.

To succeed in its efforts to reduce U.S. arms transfers, it was seen as important to change the pro-transfer culture prevalent in large parts of the bureaucracy. Therefore, Carter sought to strengthen the only federal body exclusively dedicated to arms control, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). In early 1978, the President told Congress that 'The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency is the focal point of my Administration's efforts to reach arms control agreements through negotiations and to develop policies which will lead to reduce worldwide reliance on weaponry.'<sup>83</sup> Carter met resistance in this task already with his nomination of Paul Warnke as director of the Agency and chief negotiator at the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT). The appointment of Warnke, an outspoken critic of the superpower arms race<sup>84</sup> and a liberal arms control advocate, was confirmed by the Senate by a narrow margin, with 40 votes against. Ever since its inception in 1961, the ACDA had not had much power. It was believed that only an ACDA director with a close relationship to the President could have any influence on arms transfer decisions. Carter knew Warnke from their work on the Trilateral Commission, a private international think-tank, and Warnke was a close associate of Secretary of State Vance. These bonds contributed to the skepticism with which Warnke was met by Congress.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 103.

<sup>82</sup> For a comprehensive list of the working groups and their responsibilities see Memorandum (executive), Lucy Wilson Benson to the Deputy Secretary of Defense et al., 23 May 1977, JCL, WHCF, FG-97, "FG 11 5/1/77-5/31/77" folder.

<sup>83</sup> Statement (executive), the President to Congress, March 22, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-209 "FG 264 1/1/78-12/31/78" folder.

<sup>84</sup> See his 1975 article where he refers to the superpower's nuclear arms race as 'apes on a treadmill.' Paul Warnke, "Apes on a Treadmill," *Foreign Policy*, No. 18, 1975, pp. 12-29.

<sup>85</sup> For a thorough analysis of the ACDA's role in U.S. politics up until and during the first year of Carter's Presidency, see Duncan L. Clarke, *Politics and Arms Control: The Role and Effectiveness of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency*, London, 1979.

## Opposition to the policy

Although a majority in the Legislative and the Executive branches of government agreed that U.S. arms transfers needed new guidelines, there was no consensus on the new policy. According to Benson, the arms transfer policy was 'one of the more controversial foreign policy initiatives of the Administration,' and PD-13 was met with variable support in the Executive Branch.<sup>86</sup> The pro-transfer bureaucracy of the Pentagon was, as expected, critical to many of the guidelines. They believed the policy would hurt the defense capabilities of the U.S.A. and its allies.<sup>87</sup> Also segments of the State Department bureaucracy, especially the country desks, were opposed to the policy, and argued that the policy could damage security relationships with several countries.<sup>88</sup> As the following chapters will show, also Carter's senior policy advisers, such as Brzezinski and Brown, who during the development of PD-13 had supported a policy of restraint, shortly after its announcement, started advocating a more active arms transfer policy than that outlined in PD-13.

It has not been possible to discern any clear-cut groups in Congress who either supported or opposed the policy from its announcement. A possible explanation for this is that there was uncertainty over how the policy would be implemented. However, as the policy was begun put into life, opposition to it became heard from Capitol Hill. This will be dealt with in the case studies. Nevertheless, it seems clear that a number of lawmakers, especially Republicans, but even some Democrats who had supported the Congressional effort on a new arms sales policy during the 1960s and 1970s, from the outset believed the Carter policy was too radical. At the same time, Benson said, without mentioning names, that several members of Congress criticized the policy for including too many exceptions and being 'so surrounded with artful exceptions and ingenious arithmetic as to make meaningful restraint impossible.'<sup>89</sup> There were also concerns that the policy would have a negative effect on U.S. employment. According to an analysis by the Labor Department, \$1 billion in arms exports represented employment for 51,000 persons for one year.<sup>90</sup> In times of high unemployment, a government-sponsored effort to decrease exports of any U.S. merchandise was bound to be criticized.

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<sup>86</sup> Benson, "Turning the Arms Supertanker," p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 11, 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President, 31-41: 10/77-1/78" folder.

<sup>89</sup> Benson, "Turning the Arms Supertanker," p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Max Holland, "The Myth of Arms Restraint," p. 8940.

Spokespersons from the weapons industry argued that the policy was discriminatory and overly restrictive. The industry and their backers in Congress, mainly those representing states with large defense industries, and Republicans supporting a continuation of the Nixon and Ford Administrations' arms transfer policy, believed that, if the policy were implemented, other arms producers would simply fill the void left by U.S. restraint, and that this problem could prove to be irreversible.<sup>91</sup> Carter, however, stated that he would not let global market mechanisms 'drive our arms transfer policy across the board,' even if it meant that other arms suppliers might increase their market shares at U.S. expense.<sup>92</sup>

The day after the initiative was announced, *The New York Times* concluded: 'how the new policy differs broadly from the programs of previous administrations remains vague except in the President's stated commitment to shift the burden of persuasion to those who favor a sale rather than to those who oppose it.'<sup>93</sup> As mentioned, only parts of Carter's arms transfer policy – such as its refusal to cooperate with the U.S. defense industry in their promotional activities, and its ban on arms production solely for exports – were innovations. The policy was basically a development of legislative initiatives. Many of the control mechanisms stemmed from Congressional proposals and were extensions of the policies advocated by the Congress from the late 1960s, which had resulted in the 1976 Arms Export Control Act (AECA). The study leading to PD-13 was itself based upon the AECA, which required a comprehensive Executive Branch review of U.S. arms transfer policy and possible restraint initiatives.<sup>94</sup> These Congressional initiatives, however, had been forced upon the Executive Branch, and the more radical congressional amendments to the arms transfer regulations had previously been modified by Presidential vetoes by Nixon and Ford. What was groundbreaking with the Carter policy, and what strengthened the effort, was that it had been developed by the Executive Branch.

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<sup>91</sup> Letter (executive), Frank Moore to George Mahon, September 15, 1977, JCL, WHCF, ND-49, "ND 18, 9/1/77 – 9/30/77," folder.

<sup>92</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Dale Milford, August 22, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-31, "FO 3-2/CO 119, 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>93</sup> "Broad Carter Policy Will Restrict Sales of Weapons Abroad," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1977, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> President's Reorganization Project, June 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, James T. McIntyre Collection, Box 10, "President's Reorganization Project – Decision Analysis Report, 6/77" folder.

## **Carter's rationales for the new arms transfer policy**

It has been impossible to locate or access any administration records which grade or categorize the Carter's motives for developing a new arms transfer policy. Therefore, an attempt to examine the rationales behind the policy will have to be based on fragments of internal documents and public statements, and on an analysis of the administration's arms transfer decisions. However, it seems safe to assume that the policy was heavily motivated by idealistic rationales, such as concern for Third World welfare, as well as *Realpolitik* considerations, such as concern for national security and domestic public opinion. Even if it is problematic to draw a precise line between the rationales, because they often overlap, it is instructive to group them into considerations for: (1) U.S. national security; (2) world peace and justice; and (3) domestic public opinion, in that order of importance.

## **Responding to domestic opinion**

The U.S. public's interest in foreign affairs had dropped sharply after the end of the Vietnam War. According to various polls, the percentage of the population who identified international problems as the "most important issue" had fallen from 65 percent in 1952 to 58 percent in 1966 and 7 percent by 1977.<sup>95</sup> Notwithstanding this greater public focus on domestic affairs, a December 1978 NBC poll showed that 57 percent of Americans opposed all arms sales.<sup>96</sup> An important factor in public skepticism towards arms transfers was the belief that they could drag the country into another conflict like the one in Vietnam.<sup>97</sup> Also creating opposition to U.S. arms sales practices was the revelation during the Watergate investigations that the U.S. aerospace giants Lockheed, Northrop, Boeing and McDonnell Douglas had been bribing foreign officials.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, even if there are no available records to prove it, we may safely assume that, during the 1976 election campaign, Carter and his advisers calculated that the initiative would be popular among Democrats as well as centrist Republican voters, and partly based its policy on this assumption.

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<sup>95</sup> Referred to in Farid Abolfathi, "Threat, Public Opinion, and Military Spending in the United States, 1930–1990," in Pat McGowan and Charles W. Kegley, eds., *Threats, Weapons, and Foreign Policy*, Beverly Hills, CA, 1980, pp. 95–96.

<sup>96</sup> Memorandum (executive), Norman Clyne to Christine Dodson, May 16, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FG-209, "FG 264, 1/1/79–5/31/79," folder.

<sup>97</sup> Michael T. Klare and Cynthia Arnson, *Supplying Repression: U.S. Support for Authoritarian Regimes Abroad*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> Sampson, *The Arms Bazaar*, pp. 272–274. Lockheed, Northrop and McDonnell Douglas were among the producers that relied most on exports for their income. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1981*, London, 1981, p. 189.



## **World peace and considerations of international justice**

The arms transfer policy was partly a result of Carter's vision of bringing new moral considerations into U.S. foreign policy. It reflected his conviction that it was morally wrong for the U.S.A. to be the world's leading arms salesman.<sup>99</sup> The arms transfer policy was part of the package of initiatives often referred to as Carter's world-order policy – which also included “global” issues such as human rights, environmental problems and Third World economic development. In speaking to Congress and the public about the new arms transfer policy, President Carter and administration officials, such as Assistant Director of ACDA Barry Blechman, often referred to the special responsibility the U.S.A. had, as the largest exporter, in restraining its transfers, because weapons proliferation ‘threatens the security, stability, and economic development of Third World countries.’<sup>100</sup>

## **National security considerations**

The most important rationale for Carter's arms transfer policy lay in national security considerations. Carter believed that restraint in arms transfers could improve U.S. security. For example, in March 1978 he told Congress: ‘wherever possible, we seek to enhance our security through arms control. Our security and the security of all nations can be better served through equitable and verifiable limits on arms than through unbridled competition.’<sup>101</sup> While Carter believed that the stability of the U.S.-Soviet nuclear relationship was the most urgent task of arms control, he also argued that ‘worldwide traffic in vast quantities of sophisticated conventional arms and regional arms buildups have far-reaching implications for our own peace and security.’<sup>102</sup> The presence of large quantities of arms in Third World countries fostered regional instabilities which could be detrimental to U.S. interests: among other things, it could impede U.S. trade, hamper oil supplies, or reduce U.S. influence. Moreover, U.S. security could be threatened directly by its own arms transfers, in several ways.

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<sup>99</sup> Under Secretary of State, Leslie Gelb, said in a September 1980 interview that ‘Carter felt that arms sales were evil in and of themselves; and that somehow our being first in the world of arms sales was inconsistent with his vision of what the U.S. should be.’ “An Interview with Leslie Gelb,” *Arms Control Today*, No. 8, 1980, p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Speech by Barry Blechman at the Woodrow Wilson Center, May 21, 1979. Memorandum (executive), Norman G. Clyne to Christine Dodson, May 16, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FG-209, “FG 264 1/31/79–5/3/79” folder. See also Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977.

<sup>101</sup> Statement (executive), by the President to the Congress, March 22, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-209, “FG 264 1/1/78–12/31/78” folder.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

Arms recipients could become adversaries or arms could be diverted to countries or terrorists hostile to the United States.

However, the most important part of this rationale was tied to U.S.–Soviet competition. This component behind the arms transfer policy was twofold. On the one hand, arms transfers could draw the United States into overseas conflicts, and even result in armed confrontations with the Soviet Union.<sup>103</sup> The arms transfer policy was thus part of détente and sought to reduce superpower tension. On the other hand, the restraint initiative was also created to counter Soviet global activism. As noted, both superpowers were using arms transfers as tools to increase their influence in the Third World. In this respect, however, the Soviets were seen to have advantages over the U.S.A. Precisely because the Soviet system was not democratic, the Kremlin was not restricted in its arms transfer policy by public or legislative opinion. Whereas the U.S. Executive had been hampered by Congressional decisions in its arms transfer policy (as in 1975, when Congress prohibited further U.S. arms transfers to Angola; and in 1976, when Congressional action had reduced security assistance to several Latin American countries), Soviet authorities could freely export where they wanted. Also, because major U.S. arms transfer decisions needed to be approved by Congress, the Soviets could move arms into a friendly country faster than the U.S.A. Thus it was in the U.S. interest to reduce this dimension of the superpower competition.<sup>104</sup> Because Carter's arms transfer policy was largely motivated by the wish to reduce the superpower competition and hamper Soviet foreign policy objectives, its success would depend on Soviet cooperation and the continuation of détente. This is the topic of the next chapter.

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<sup>103</sup> For this argumentation, see Statement by Barry Blechman, *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> For this argumentation by an Administration official, see speech by Barry Blechman at the Woodrow Wilson Center, May 21, 1979. This speech was cleared by National Security Council officials. Memorandum (executive), Norman G. Clyne to Christine Dodson, May 16, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FG-209, "FG 264 1/31/79-5/3/79" folder.

## Chapter 3

# Diplomatic Efforts

*Recognizing that unilateral restraint can have only limited effectiveness without multilateral cooperation, the United States will continue its efforts to urge other suppliers to join us in pursuing policies of restraint.<sup>1</sup>*

According to a 1979 publication by the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the United States was by far the world's largest weapons exporter in 1976. In this year, it transferred \$5.9 billion worth of arms, while the Soviet Union exported for \$4.7 billion, France for \$925 million, the United Kingdom for \$675 million, and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) for \$650 million.<sup>2</sup> In his public announcement of the arms transfer policy on May 19, 1977, Jimmy Carter stated that 'because of the special responsibilities we bear as the largest arms seller, I believe that the United States must take steps to restrain its arms transfers.'<sup>3</sup> However, he had also made it clear during the presidential campaign that he intended to pursue multilateral measures to reduce the international arms trade,<sup>4</sup> and he acknowledged from the outset that the success of the unilateral reductions depended on multilateral cooperation.

As with most of the unilateral guidelines in PD-13, discussions on multilateral control of the conventional arms trade were not inventions. Even though Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford had not emphasized this aspect in their foreign policies, Congress had as early as in 1971 advised the Executive Branch to initiate negotiations on arms transfer restraint with France, Italy, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and West Germany. This idea was more strongly expressed by Congress both in 1974 and in the 1976 Arms Export Control Act, which stated that the U.S.A. should 'exert leadership in the world community to bring about arrangements for reducing the international trade in implements of war.'<sup>5</sup> However, none of Carter's predecessors

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<sup>1</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth, ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1968-1977, Washington D.C., 1979, pp. 129-151.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter, 1981*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

<sup>4</sup> Press briefing at Plains, July 29, 1976, *Presidential Campaign 1976, Volume One: Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 374.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in William D. Hartung, "Why Sell Arms? Lessons from the Carter Years," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1993, p. 59.

had seriously attempted to involve other arms exporters in agreements controlling the sales of conventional arms.

The objectives of the Carter Administration's multilateral arms control efforts were threefold:

- to set an example for international restraint through unilateral measures
- to initiate discussions with suppliers and recipients
- to produce common guidelines on restraint among these suppliers and recipients.<sup>6</sup>

The last of these objectives was rather ambitious, as there had never before been any efforts among the major suppliers to restrain global arms transfers. Carter's attempts to achieve the first goal will be discussed in chapters 4 through 11. As to the second goal, except for some exploratory meetings with Latin American countries, there were no serious attempts to obtain recipient restraint. As we shall soon see, the initiative to reach the third goal by including other arms suppliers in negotiations was also unavailing. The only major arms supplier the administration managed to involve in serious discussions was the Soviet Union. The Conventional Arms Transfers (CAT) talks between the two superpowers lasted only one year, collapsing in December 1978.

This chapter surveys the Carter Administration's efforts to reach bilateral and multilateral arms transfer restraint agreements, and discusses possible reasons for the lack of success. Because the CAT talks with the Soviet Union were the only serious negotiations on the topic, the focus will be on these. Moreover, since the CAT talks caused disputes within the administration, they offer an informative example of the differing opinions within the Executive Branch over the arms transfer policy in general and multilateral efforts in particular. As the success of the unilateral restraint policy was perceived to rest on agreements with other arms suppliers, this chapter will discuss how this failure influenced implementation of PD-13.

The diplomatic efforts have received more scholarly attention than other aspects of Carter's arms transfer policy. However, because most of these efforts were led by the State Department, and it normally takes at least 30 years before State Department

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<sup>6</sup> Statement by Leslie Gelb. *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations of the Senate*, February 1 and 2, 1978, Washington D.C., 1978., p. 10.

documents are declassified, there are few available government archive sources dealing with this issue. Therefore, the analysis of important aspects of the efforts – such as the administration’s motivations for engaging the Soviet Union in talks and reasons for the choice of negotiation tactics – will mainly be assumptions based upon decisions and actions taken by the Carter Administration, scholarly works, press reports and retrospective statements made by officials involved in the process.

## **Talks with West European arms suppliers**

Vice President Walter Mondale approached several West European arms-exporting countries about the possibility of a multilateral restraint regime on his first trip to Europe in late January 1977. Carter hoped to develop a coordinated stance among U.S. allies before beginning discussions with the Soviet Union. Unpublicized lower-level meetings followed between officials of the United States and the three major West European suppliers: France, the United Kingdom, and West Germany.

The Europeans met the U.S. appeal for restraint with only pro forma responses. Arguing that it was unlikely that the Soviets would be serious in such negotiations, they adopted a wait-and-see stance and made their willingness to start genuine negotiations conditional on a show of concrete compliance by the Soviet Union to reduce its foreign arms trade.<sup>7</sup> According to an NSC memorandum to Carter, French authorities ‘flatly rebuffed every effort we have made to involve them in supplier restraint.’<sup>8</sup> French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing stated publicly that France would not consider restraint measures without full participation by the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> The European attitude toward the U.S. restraint policy and the possibility of achieving multilateral restraint was illustrated in a statement by a British defense ministry official to the *Wall Street Journal* in July 1977: ‘I think it’s a splendid thing for the general public or for political consumption to subscribe to the idea of building plowshares, rather than swords. But we’re all against sin – though we all indulge in it from time to time.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Memorandum (executive), Norman G. Clyne to Christine Dodson, May 29, 1979, JCL, White House Central Files [henceforth WHCF], Box FG-209, “FG 264: 1/1/79–5/31/79” folder.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, January 12, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, “Weekly Reports to the President 53-60: 4/78–5/78” folder.

<sup>9</sup> Nicole Ball and Milton Leitenberg, “The Foreign Arms Sales of the Carter Administration,” *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, No. 35, 1979, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> “Filling the Gap: Europeans Scramble to Sell Arms to Nations Turned Down by U.S.,” *Wall Street Journal*, 1 July 1977, p. 1.

Doubts as to Soviet willingness to reduce its transfers were one reason for the European reservations. A further explanation can be found in the character of the West European arms industry. With a much smaller domestic market than producers in the U.S.A., European arms producers depended more on exports to remain cost-effective. While U.S. sales were based mainly on political and security considerations, sales by European producers were motivated largely by economic imperatives, and exports were primarily a means to maintain a domestic defense production base.<sup>11</sup> France exported 41 percent of all its arms in 1977 and Great Britain 35 percent, while the United States and the Soviet Union had far lower export percentages.<sup>12</sup> Except for Northrop Corporation, exports by the major U.S. arms producers in 1977 accounted for only some 12 percent of their revenues.<sup>13</sup> In addition, most arms-producing European countries based their industry on one producer per weapon sector. This meant that major reductions in exports could lead not only to unemployment but also to reduction in arms development and manufacturing capabilities, and the loss of independence in defense production.<sup>14</sup>

European skepticism was also partly a result of the previous U.S. arms transfer policy. The U.S.A. dominated the arms trade among the NATO partners. Not only did Pentagon procure equipment almost exclusively from domestic manufacturers, the U.S.A. was also by far the largest arms exporter to Western Europe. This trend was believed to be reinforced by the U.S.-sponsored quest for standardization of NATO equipment.<sup>15</sup> As a result, to keep their own exports high, the European governments considered it necessary to trade with the Third World: with precisely those recipients who were the focus of Carter's restraint policy. For example, in the late 1970s, France

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<sup>11</sup> Although economic considerations were more important, the Europeans also had political reasons for exporting arms – as with French arms exports to Africa, where France exercised influence in several countries through large-scale arms export programs. See Bruce E. Arlinghaus, *Military Development in Africa: The Political and Economic Risks of Arms Transfers*, London, 1984, pp. 36–38. For other analyses of rationales behind European arms exports, see Fredrick Pearson, "Problems and Prospects of Arms Transfer Limitations among Second-tier Suppliers: The Cases of France, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany," in Thomas Ohlson, ed., *Arms Transfer Limitations and Third World Security*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 128–156; and Edward Kolodziej, "Determinants of French Arms Sales: Security Implications," in Charles Kegley and Patrick McGowan, eds., *Threats, Weapons, and Foreign Policy*, Beverly Hills, CA, 1980, pp. 162–167.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on the West European arms industry, see Keith Krause, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 127–152.

<sup>15</sup> Pearson, "Problems and Prospects," in Ohlson, ed., *Arms Transfer Limitations*, p. 128.

exported approximately 80 percent of all its sales to Third World countries.<sup>16</sup> The Europeans also feared that because Carter's policy was not aimed at reducing arms exports to NATO countries, U.S. arms sales to Western Europe would grow, thereby worsening the market opportunities for the European manufacturers.<sup>17</sup>

For its diplomatic initiative toward the Europeans to succeed, Washington would have had to increase arms imports from its NATO partners. There are no indications that this was seriously discussed. While the U.S.A. exported \$6.7 billion worth of arms in 1978, its imports reached only \$111 million.<sup>18</sup> Under these circumstances, it was unrealistic for Carter to hope that European producers would agree to export restrictions to the Third World. For the major European producers to accept reduced arms sales, they would also have needed to accept cutbacks in employment and possibly a qualitative and quantitative deterioration of their defense industries. These prospects were not acceptable to European governments, already struggling with negative balances of payments and high unemployment rates.

Although the Europeans did not reject the U.S. offer outright, it is unlikely that they seriously considered reducing their arms exports. In a bid for time, they conditioned their participation in the new U.S. policy upon concrete signs of Soviet reductions. As mentioned in chapter 1, arms transfers played an important role in the U.S.-Soviet geopolitical struggle during the Cold War, and it is likely that the Europeans felt confident that the superpowers would not manage to reach an agreement on transfer restraint. That meant that, even if they had no intentions of joining a U.S.-sponsored restraint regime, they could put up a show of flexibility, premising their cooperation upon a condition they believed would never materialize.

The failure to engage the major European arms suppliers in restraint agreements had negative effects on the main objective of Carter's arms transfer policy: to restrain global arms transfers. Under Carter, the U.S.A. reduced its exports to the Third World from \$5.4 billion in 1977 to \$3.6 billion in 1981, while increasing its sales to developed countries from \$1.3 billion to \$2.8 billion.<sup>19</sup> In the same period, France more than doubled its exports to the Third World, from \$1.3 billion to \$2.7 billion;

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<sup>16</sup> Krause, *Arms and the State*, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Statement of Edward C. Luck, Deputy Director of Policy Studies, the United Nations Association of the U.S.A., *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 108.

<sup>18</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1969-1978*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 155.

<sup>19</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1988*, Washington D.C., 1989, pp. 69-128.

and the United Kingdom increased its transfers from \$900 million to \$1.6 billion.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the U.S.A. may have reduced its exports to the Third World, but this was more than compensated by increased transfers from the two largest Western European producers. Moreover, not only did the Europeans increase exports to their traditional recipients, but U.S. restraint to certain countries was countered by increased imports by these countries from some of the United States' closest allies. This was obvious in Latin America, the region where the Carter Administration showed the greatest consistency in applying its restraint policy. Rising European exports to Latin America exposed Carter to criticism from arms-sales advocates in Congress, the bureaucracy and the industry, who all wanted Carter to tone down the unilateral restraint guidelines. This also complicated Washington's efforts to negotiate a restraint agreement with Moscow.

## **The Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) talks**

The Carter Administration had hoped to reach agreements with its allies in Europe first, but was forced to proceed directly to talks with the Soviets. In March 1977, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance traveled to Moscow, mainly to negotiate a SALT II agreement. The U.S. "deep cut" proposal was, however, rejected by the Soviets, and the trip was considered a fiasco. Despite the failure to negotiate nuclear arms limitations, which was the prime subject for both the Soviets and the Americans, the two sides agreed to set up bilateral working groups on nine subjects relating to arms control, among them arms transfers to Third World countries.<sup>21</sup>

Even if both superpowers used arms transfers as part of their strategies to increase their global influence and gain leverage over recipients, there were also marked differences in their arms transfer policies. The Soviet Union was the world's second-largest arms-exporting country, transferring weapons worth \$6.5 billion in 1977, and accounting for approximately 30 percent of the global weapons trade.<sup>22</sup> The CIA estimated that the Soviet Union in 1976 earned \$1.5 billion on foreign arms sales, and these earnings were expected to grow.<sup>23</sup> Although there were fewer recipients of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The other working groups covered these issues: test ban on nuclear weapons; chemical weapons; prior warning on missile tests; restrictions on anti-satellite weapons; civil defense; Indian Ocean agreement; treaty on radiological weapons; and strengthening of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. See Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York, 1983, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1969–1978*, p. 150.

<sup>23</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 107.



Soviet than U.S. arms, the Soviet's major recipients, Libya, South Yemen, Cuba, India, and Syria, relied almost exclusively on the U.S.S.R. for their arms imports. The Soviet Union was the largest arms supplier to North Africa, South Asia and Central America (the latter because of its exports to Cuba).<sup>24</sup> In the Middle East, it ranked as the second-largest supplier, after the United States.<sup>25</sup> A lack of other inducements, like technical and economic aid, coupled with a reluctance to use Soviet troops far from its borders, meant that the Soviet Union depended even more on arms transfers as a foreign-policy tool than did the United States. In addition, as mentioned in chapter 1, the Soviets had a competitive advantage: they could move arms faster to their clients than could the U.S.A. In addition, even if Soviet arms exports were based more on political and strategic than economic motivations, the U.S.S.R. also relied on a large weapons-export program to pay for its growing imports.<sup>26</sup> While arms sales accounted for 13 percent of all Soviet exports in 1976, only 5 percent of all U.S. export earnings stemmed from arms sales.<sup>27</sup>

Because the United States and the Soviet Union were the world's leading arms suppliers, between them responsible for over two-thirds of all arms sales to the Third World, Carter's objective of reducing global arms transfers would be unachievable without an understanding between the two. Also, as mentioned in the previous chapter, an important rationale behind the restraint policy was to reduce the superpower competition in the Third World, and for this, Soviet cooperation was necessary. Statements from administration officials and U.S. negotiation tactics during the talks indicate that Washington perceived the discussions as more of a foreign-policy negotiation than pure arms control negotiations.<sup>28</sup> Because they are closely intertwined, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between these two aspects of any arms control negotiation. However, because officials involved acknowledged that there were differences, and because disagreements within the Executive Branch over negotiating tactics were largely based on these two distinctions, it is instructive to separate them. These differences and their impact on the negotiations will be discussed below.

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<sup>24</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1981*, London, 1981, p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1968-1977*, pp. 147 and 151.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, "An Interview with Leslie Gelb," *Arms Control Today*, No. 8, 1980, p. 4; Barry M. Blechman, Janne E. Nolan and Alan Platt, "Pushing Arms," *Foreign Policy*, No. 46, 1982, pp. 142-150; and Barry M. Blechman and Janne E. Nolan, "Reorganizing for More Effective Arms Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 61, No. 5, 1983, pp. 1157-1182.

Washington could not know to what extent Moscow was likely to fill the void that might be left by U.S. restraint, but the Department of Defense argued that the 'Soviets are known to recognize and exploit new opportunities as part of their doctrine.'<sup>29</sup> Restraint on the part of the U.S.A. alone would, it was believed, limit U.S. foreign-policy options and thus weaken its competitiveness vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Cooperation, however, could reduce international competition and lead to greater stability.

## The negotiations

The U.S. delegation to the CAT talks was headed by Leslie Gelb, Director of the Office of Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department. It included representatives from all the main agencies involved in the arms transfer decision-making process, such as the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the State and Defense Departments, the National Security Council staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>30</sup> In addition, specialists on countries, regions, and weapons systems were consulted as necessary. The Soviet delegation was composed of arms control and regional specialists. During the first meeting, the Soviet delegation was led by the former Soviet chief negotiator at the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction talks, Oleg Khlestov, after which it was led by career diplomat Lev I. Mendelevich.<sup>31</sup> The fact that the U.S. delegation was led by the Office of Politico-Military Affairs supports the theory that the CAT talks were perceived by the U.S. Administration as mainly foreign-policy negotiations.<sup>32</sup> No doubt, Carter hoped that superpower cooperation would help reduce the level of global armaments, but if the talks had been seen as mainly arms control negotiations, the U.S. delegation would most probably have been led by the director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Paul Warnke.

The first round, which was more exploratory consultations than real negotiations, was held in Washington in mid-December 1977. Gelb informed the Soviets about the new

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<sup>29</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Arms Transfer Policy, Report to Congress for use of Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*, Ipswich, 1995, p. 118.

<sup>31</sup> Graham Kearns, *Arms for the Poor: President Carter's Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*, Canberra, 1980, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> This assertion is based on a published interview with Leslie Gelb from September 1980, where he states that 'I think we understood from the beginning that CATT [sic] was a foreign policy negotiation, essentially, which is why I was put in charge rather than the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.' "An Interview with Leslie Gelb," *Arms Control Today*, p. 4.

U.S. arms transfer policy and Washington's concept of negotiating a multilateral restraint regime. He further expressed the U.S. wish to tie the talks to the 1972 bilateral Basic Principles Agreement and the 1973 Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, to which the Soviets agreed.<sup>33</sup> Khlestov and his delegation listened rather than spoke during this round. At the end of the meeting, Khlestov nevertheless expressed the wish to continue the process, and agreed to set a date for a next round. The very fact of establishing talks was seen by National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski as a 'major accomplishment:' he was optimistic for a new round and felt that the Soviet Union would involve itself 'in a serious process on CAT.'<sup>34</sup> This optimism must be seen in the context of U.S.-Soviet relations at the time. Vance's mission to Moscow in March had been a failure. He had brought with him a U.S. proposal for further discussions on Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT II), which the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, had rejected with 'vehemence and finality.'<sup>35</sup> In addition, U.S.-Soviet relations had been soured by Carter's criticism of Moscow's human rights policy, and superpower tensions had been further exacerbated by the ongoing conflict in the Horn of Africa. One month before the talks started, the Soviets had begun a large-scale airlift of arms and Cuban troops to Ethiopia for their fight against Somalia in the contested Ogaden region. During the three months of the Soviet airlift program, Moscow sent Addis Ababa some \$1 billion worth of military equipment.<sup>36</sup>

The second round of CAT talks was held in Helsinki in May 1978. Approximately one month prior to this, a pro-Soviet regime had come to power in Afghanistan. Even if the Soviet participation in this shift of power was uncertain, it caused uneasiness in Washington. Before the meeting, Gelb argued that this round would have to produce some results. He saw it as important to convince skeptics in the administration and the arms transfer bureaucracy, as well as the U.S. public, that the talks were leading somewhere. In addition, Washington wished to send a signal to other suppliers (especially in Western Europe) that the discussions were serious.<sup>37</sup> Gelb was instructed by Carter that his primary objective at the meeting would be to 'determine

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<sup>33</sup> Roger P. Labrie, John G. Hutchins and Edwin Peura, *U.S. Arms Sales Policy: Background and Issues*, Washington D.C., 1982, p. 212.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, January 12, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President 53-60: 4/78-5/78" folder.

<sup>35</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation. American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington D.C., 1985, p. 703.

<sup>37</sup> Blechman et al., "Pushing Arms," pp. 138-143.

whether' the Soviets were 'serious about this effort.'<sup>38</sup> The round did not produce any concrete results, but a joint communiqué was worked out. The communiqué, framed in diplomatic and optimistic language, was not specific but indicated signs of progress and linked the problem to the 1972 Basic Principles Agreement.

The third session was held in Helsinki in July 1978. In the period between the second and third meeting, Carter had been struggling to get the Senate to approve controversial sales of sophisticated jet fighters to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. These arms sales decisions were interpreted by many observers as a sign that Carter was not serious in his intention to reduce U.S. arms transfers. Before the meeting, Gelb informed Mendelevich that subsequent implementation of unilateral restraint would in part be based on the outcome of the CAT talks.<sup>39</sup> In this third round, the Soviets emphasized the need for broad legal principles governing arms transfers, such as establishing criteria defining recipients' eligibility to receive arms. The U.S. delegation did not refuse to negotiate this approach, but favored technical criteria like levels of transfers by type and quantity; it saw broad guidelines as meaningless and even counterproductive unless attached to enforceable principles. The technical criteria proposed by the U.S. side were similar in concept to the unilateral restraint guidelines in PD-13. As a compromise, two working groups were established to cover both approaches, and each delegation tabled a proposed set of principles for technical and legal guidelines.<sup>40</sup> For the first time during the talks, the U.S. delegation pressed for discussions on arms transfer restraint to specific regions – Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. These two regions were deemed the least difficult to discuss because neither the United States nor the Soviet Union had a dominant share of arms exports there, and they were not important in the East–West competition.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, at the third round of negotiations Gelb and Mendelevich agreed to a framework for discussion consisting of three parts: legal and political criteria on recipients' rights to purchase arms, technical criteria classifying weapons in quality and quantity, and identification of regions most suitable to implement these

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<sup>38</sup> Presidential Directive 36 (secret), April 28, 1978, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 21-40" folder.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum (secret), Warren Christopher to the President, July 27, 1978, JCL, Plains File, Subject File, Box 38, "State Department Evening Reports: 7/78" folder.

<sup>40</sup> Barry M. Blechman, Janne E. Nolan and Alan Platt, "Negotiated Limitations on Arms Transfers," in Alexander L. George, *Managing U.S.–Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention*, Boulder, CO, 1983, p. 266.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

guidelines.<sup>42</sup> Gelb reported back to the State Department that the two sides had made 'good progress in defining principles and criteria to limit arms transfers by type and amount.'<sup>43</sup>

The fourth and final round of talks was held in Mexico City in December 1978. The White House was then in the final stage of normalizing relations with the Peoples' Republic of China. Sino-U.S. normalization was partly a result of worsening U.S.-Soviet relations, and it further exacerbated the superpower competition.<sup>44</sup> The U.S. CAT delegation continued to focus on Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa as possible regions for restraint. Before the talks there were indications that the Soviets would bring to the meeting their own proposals for regions to discuss – East Asia and West Asia. These regions were never defined in detail, but Washington considered East Asia to include China and South Korea, and West Asia to include Iran. Carter and Brzezinski saw these regions as too vital to be open to discussion, and they instructed Gelb to walk out of the negotiations if the Soviets brought these up.<sup>45</sup> This aspect will be discussed further below. Gelb presented an ultimatum to Mendelevich, but the Soviets refused to only discuss the U.S. -proposed regions. As a compromise, they agreed to work on the legal and technical guidelines. However, the U.S. position of refusing to discuss the Soviet-proposed regions soured the negotiations, and the subsequent discussions proved futile.<sup>46</sup> A new round of talks was scheduled to take place in Helsinki, but was later cancelled.<sup>47</sup> Ensuing diplomatic exchanges tried to resolve the disagreements, but the meeting in Mexico City proved to be the last one.<sup>48</sup>

### **Why did the CAT talks fail?**

The first three rounds of talks, from December 1977 to July 1978, were more successful than many Washington commentators had expected.<sup>49</sup> Although the negotiations did not produce any concrete results, the delegations managed to work out some basic principles for discussions, and Gelb commented that the meetings had

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<sup>42</sup> Labrie et al., *U.S. Arms Sales Policy*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum (secret), Warren Christopher to the President, July 27, 1978, JCL, Plains File, Subject File, Box 38, "State Department Evening Reports: 7/78" folder.

<sup>44</sup> The tripartite relations will be examined in the chapter 8.

<sup>45</sup> Blechman et al. "Negotiated Limitations...", p. 266.

<sup>46</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 289.

<sup>47</sup> *U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: A Report to the Senate from the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Blechman et al., "Negotiated Limitations...", p. 266.

<sup>49</sup> Jo. L. Husbands, "A World in Arms: Geography of the Weapons Trade," *Focus*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1980, p. 10.

progressed 'from the totally implausible to the possible.'<sup>50</sup> Why then did the talks break down in December 1978? Here what needs to be explained is why the negotiations collapsed, and why they collapsed precisely when they did.

Barry Blechman, who was Assistant Director of ACDA and the Agency's representative at the talks, argued in 1982 that the breakdown was due to internal factors in the Carter Administration: the result of 'bureaucratic confusion, personal rivalries, and tactical errors.'<sup>51</sup> Although this can be only part of the explanation, because the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations also contributed, internal factors did play an important role, especially for the timing of the collapse.

From early 1978 there were increasing clashes within the Carter Administration's foreign policy and national security establishment. The main point of contention was how to deal with the Soviet Union and conflicts in the Third World. During his first eighteen months in office, Carter had changed his views on the U.S.-Soviet relationship, becoming increasingly worried about the Soviet role in the Third World. A large part of Congress perceived Soviet actions as deliberate efforts by Moscow to increase its global influence, and there were widespread allegations in the U.S. press that Carter had a weak foreign policy. Most importantly, this strengthened the opposition to SALT II and undermined Carter's chances of gaining Congressional support for the nuclear arms control treaties which he had placed considerable prestige in concluding. Therefore, he decided to endorse the approach of the State Department and Brzezinski, using the CAT talks as a means to reduce Soviet operations in these parts of the world.<sup>52</sup> The fate of the CAT talks must be understood as mainly a consequence of the generally deteriorating U.S.-Soviet relations. And then, when the talks failed, they may have contributed to worsening the relations even further.<sup>53</sup>

The U.S. commitment to unilateral moderation in its arms exports, before it had involved other countries in discussions, presented the White House with a Catch-22

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<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Kearns, *Arms for the Poor*, p. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Blechman et al., "Pushing Arms," p. 149. This assertion is in concordance with most scholarly analyses of the talks. See, for example, Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 302. Pierre concludes: 'the blame for the collapse of the CAT talks is more properly placed in Washington than in Moscow.' See also Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, pp. 116-130; and Hartung, *Why Sell Arms?* pp. 59-62.

<sup>52</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 838.

<sup>53</sup> Blechman et al., "Negotiated Limitations...", p. 256.

situation, because it gave it less maneuverability in the bilateral and multilateral negotiations. The Soviets were dealing from a position of strength, and for Moscow these were no-lose, all-win negotiations. Possible motives for Soviet participation in the CAT talks include the prospect of obtaining stronger U.S. unilateral restraint, reducing U.S. weapons transfers to the Soviet Union's neighboring states, such as Iran and China, and decreasing Washington's leverage on the oil-producing countries in the Middle East (through reduced U.S. arms transfers to the region).<sup>54</sup> That the Carter Administration presented its unilateral policy before it engaged other arms suppliers can be perceived as a tactical error. However, it is difficult to see how it could have handled this differently. With the U.S.A. the world's leading arms exporter, it is unlikely that other exporters would have agreed to cooperate on sales reductions if the U.S.A. did not first restrain its transfers.

There was dissension within the Carter Administration from the outset of the arms restraint policy. Most of the Department of Defense and the country and regional desks of the Department of State, were opposed to unilateral restraint and also challenged the wisdom of the U.S.-Soviet consultations. Brzezinski, who first supported the unilateral policy, wanted a tougher posture towards the Soviets, and became highly pessimistic about both the unilateral and multilateral measures.<sup>55</sup> By the time the talks moved to a critical phase at the end of 1978, Brzezinski had considerably increased his power over Carter's foreign policy. Brzezinski was unwilling to compromise with the Soviets on arms control if it affected other of his foreign-policy objectives, such as normalization of relations with China and stabilization of the Shah's Iran. More positive high-ranking administration officials, such as Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Paul Warnke, considered the talks less important than other arms control measures like the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and did not fight seriously for them.<sup>56</sup> A report from Vance to the President setting up foreign-policy priorities for 1979 and 1980 clearly shows that negotiations on conventional arms transfers were not a high priority, whereas SALT was a 'crucial issue'.<sup>57</sup> Vice President Mondale was initially

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<sup>54</sup> This theory is presented in Alvin J. Cottrell, Robert Hanks and Michael Moodie, *Arms Transfers and U.S. Foreign and Military Policy*, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 29.

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, January 12, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President 53-60: 4/78-5/78" folder.

<sup>56</sup> Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 217.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum (secret), Cyrus Vance to the President, undated, JCL, Plains File, Box 39, "State Department Evening Reports: 1/79" folder.

positive towards the talks, but later aligned himself with the opposition.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Gelb found himself in a hopeless situation.

In the negative climate that had evolved towards the negotiations, the only person who could have saved the talks was the President himself. Even though there are no indications that Carter changed his mind about the importance of conventional arms control, shortly after the development of PD-13 he down-prioritized both unilateral and diplomatic efforts at reducing global arms transfers. At that time the foreign-policy agenda was becoming dominated by issues he was forced to see as more important – superpower competition in the Horn of Africa, ratification of the Panama Canal treaties, the Arab–Israeli peace negotiations, and disturbances in Iran. With Carter no longer directly involved, with the officials supportive of Gelb’s efforts using their political capital on other issues and Brzezinski challenging the wisdom of continuing the talks, the negotiations could hardly have survived. Apart from Gelb, the U.S. delegation included only lower-level bureaucrats. When Gelb lost support in Washington, the manner in which the U.S. delegation was composed further sealed the fate of the talks. As Blechman explained retrospectively:

*... the negotiators are only proxies for their respective governments. They are given extremely limited bargaining room, and observers are present from all relevant agencies to assure that they do not stray from tightly written instructions [...] Whatever is agreed to at the table always has to be ratified in Moscow or Washington.*<sup>59</sup>

Before the third round of talks in July 1978, disagreement broke out within the Carter Administration with respect to both the purpose and U.S. negotiating tactics. Blechman and ACDA argued that linking the negotiations to other superpower issues could result in the talks breaking down. They advocated an arms control approach that would center on global as opposed to regional restrictions, and suggested discussing a list of sensitive weapons to which suppliers could agree to apply special restraint, such as ground-to-air missiles.<sup>60</sup> The rationale behind this approach was to get the process moving, and if successful, continue with the tougher questions, such as discussions on transfer of modern fighter aircraft and other sophisticated weapons, at a later stage.<sup>61</sup> Blechman argued (in 1983) that this could have produced concrete results and made the European supplier nations interested in participation. In addition, ACDA had warned that discussing regions, as opposed to technical criteria,

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<sup>58</sup> Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 217.

<sup>59</sup> Blechman and Nolan, "Reorganizing for More Effective Arms Negotiations," p. 1173.

<sup>60</sup> Labrie et al., *U.S. Arms Sales Policy*, p. 13.

<sup>61</sup> Blechman et al., "Negotiated Limitations on Arms Transfers," p. 264.



would prove politically too difficult because it would involve 'the sensitive political relations between suppliers and recipients.'<sup>62</sup> The ACDA approach was supported by Vance and Mondale.<sup>63</sup>

Brzezinski and the majority in the State Department had a different opinion on the approach to the talks. They saw the negotiations as a means of achieving other foreign-policy objectives in addition to restraining international arms trade. They hoped that through these talks the two superpowers could come to understandings on their activities in the Third World, and thus reduce superpower tension.<sup>64</sup> In order to meet these objectives, it was not enough to discuss weapon technicalities with worldwide relevance, but also transfers to specific regions and sub-regions. In sum, the main discussion point was whether the talks should be arms control negotiations or rather focus on superpower behavior in the Third World. As mentioned, Carter decided to follow Brzezinski's advice.

When Carter had decided that the delegation should follow a regional approach, all the major foreign-policy decision-makers agreed to the proposal to discuss Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. These were regions with relatively little superpower competition and the volume of arms going there was relatively low. In addition, the administration hoped to impede further Soviet influence in these areas.<sup>65</sup> Before the December 1978 session, new controversies and bureaucratic strife flared up in Washington. This time the disagreements centered on how forthcoming the U.S. delegation should be concerning the Soviet-proposed regions for negotiations. Prior to the Mexico round, the Soviets had showed interest in discussing East Asia and West Asia as regions for arms transfer restraint. These regions were problematic for Washington, because East Asia includes China and South Korea, and West Asia includes Iran. At this time, the White House was in the final stages of the normalization negotiations with Beijing, and was especially sensitive to discussing China lest that should disturb these negotiations. Because possible U.S. arms sales to China were being used in the discussions, the White House would not risk losing this asset.<sup>66</sup> In addition, discussing East Asia could affect the longstanding arms transfer

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> Blechman et al., "Negotiated Limitations on Arms Transfers," p. 265.

<sup>65</sup> Michael D. Salomone and David J. Louscher, "Dilemmas of Restraint," *Arms Control Today*, No. 8, 1980, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Hartung, "Why Sell Arms?" p. 60.

relationship with Taiwan, which had numerous supporters in Congress and a strong lobby group in Washington. Two of the Soviet suggestions for legal principles brought up earlier in the talks – prohibitions on arms transfers to states bordering on the other, and states refusing to participate in disarmament discussions – were also directed toward China: these were refused by the U.S.A.<sup>67</sup>

During the election campaign, Carter had promised to withdraw ground combat troops from South Korea, a country where the U.S.A. was almost the sole provider of arms. When the Soviets proposed to discuss East Asia, Carter was still determined to fulfill this promise. However, a U.S. withdrawal was not politically possible unless Washington also increased its arms transfers to the country. Acting Director of ACDA, Leon Sloss, suggested during the development of Presidential Review Memorandum 13 (PRM-13), the Carter Administration's policy paper on force reductions in South Korea, that troop withdrawals should include agreements on arms transfers restraint among the weapons suppliers to the Korean Peninsula. To lessen tension and ease the U.S. force reductions, Sloss proposed discussions between the major suppliers to North and South Korea on both qualitative armament limitations and reductions in military aid.<sup>68</sup> These proposals, however, were rejected by the National Security Council staff on the grounds that they were 'unlikely to be negotiable for some time.'<sup>69</sup>

In addition, the situation in Iran was rapidly deteriorating, making the administration unwilling to negotiate agreements with the Soviets which could reduce its freedom of action towards this close ally. High-ranking officials, especially in the Department of Defense and the National Security Council and the regional bureaus of the Departments of Defense and State, feared that negotiations on these regions could jeopardize longstanding bilateral relationships with friendly governments.<sup>70</sup> The U.S. position on discussing these regions is illustrated by a memorandum by Nicholas Platt, a National Security Council specialist on East Asia:

*Neither Mike Oksenberg [the chief China expert on China on the NSC staff] nor I can think of anything that would undercut our relationship with East Asian allies more*

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<sup>67</sup> Nicole Ball and Milton Leitenberg, eds., *The Structure of the Defense Industry: An International Survey*, New York, 1983, p. 32.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum (secret), Leon Sloss to David Aaron, March 10, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 2, "Armacost Chron File: 3/10-15/77" folder.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum (secret), Mike Armacost to David Aaron, March 14, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 2, "Armacost Chron File: 3/10-15/77" folder.

<sup>70</sup> Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 126.

*sharply than knowledge that we were discussing weapons deployment in the region with the Soviet Union. This applies equally, or perhaps even more strongly, to important non-allies like the Chinese. Once we discuss the issue with the Soviets by whatever channel, we provide them with a weapon they can use against us anytime they want. It is an invitation to mischief, which the Soviets will find in my view irresistible.*<sup>71</sup>

Senior administration officials, most notably Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, advised Carter not to allow the delegation to discuss these regions.<sup>72</sup> National Security Council officials argued that it could produce 'potential damage' to the U.S. posture in Asia, and that they 'could see no benefits emerging from the talks to offset the high risks of mischief.'<sup>73</sup> Prior to the fourth round, at a meeting of the Strategic Coordinating Committee, Brzezinski argued that the Soviets should be informed that these regions were not up for discussion, and that the delegation should walk out of the meeting if they raised them anyway.<sup>74</sup> Leslie Gelb, representing the State Department in Secretary Vance's absence, wanted to hold the door open to discussing East and West Asia. Although he did not think it would lead to any concrete results, he felt it would be unheard-of to refuse to listen to the Soviet proposal.<sup>75</sup> The disagreements between the two main antagonists, Brzezinski and Gelb, were said to have reached personal attacks and were described as 'dripping with venom.'<sup>76</sup> At one point during the fourth round, Brzezinski threatened Gelb that he would be recalled unless he 'developed rapidly the necessary enthusiasm for the President's position.'<sup>77</sup> Carter sided with Brzezinski, and the delegation was instructed to leave the meeting if the Soviets brought up these regions. Leslie Gelb resigned his post as Director of the State Department Office of Politico-Military Affairs in April 1979, and was replaced by Brzezinski's friend Reginald Bartholomew. Internal disagreements over the CAT talks are held to have contributed to Gelb's resignation.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Memorandum (secret), Nicholas Platt to Jessica Tuchman, October 19, 1978, JCL, WHCF, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 65, "Platt Chron File: 10/78" folder.

<sup>72</sup> Blechman et al., "Negotiated Limitations on Arms Transfers," p. 269.

<sup>73</sup> Memorandum (secret), Michael Oksenberg and Nicholas Platt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, November 17, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 65, "Platt Chron File: 11/16-30/78" folder.

<sup>74</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 289.

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum (secret), Michael Oksenberg and Nicholas Platt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, November 17, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 65, "Platt Chron File: 11/16-30/78" folder.

<sup>76</sup> "Feud in the Administration Said to Endanger Talks on Arms Sales Pact," *The New York Times*, December 18, 1978.

<sup>77</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 - 1981* New York, 1983, p. 175.

<sup>78</sup> Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 838.

Also important for explaining the breakdown of the talks was that the bilateral and multilateral conventional arms transfer negotiations did not enjoy top priority. Even if Gelb in a Congressional testimony in early 1978 had stated, 'This administration believes that the time has come to address conventional arms transfer issues with the same seriousness of purpose that we devote to nuclear arms limitation,'<sup>79</sup> SALT was always perceived by Carter and his main foreign policy advisers to be of more importance. Gelb admitted after the talks had broken down that he and Vance had used their leverage on SALT and not on the CAT talks.<sup>80</sup>

Internal disagreements resulted in indecision and fluctuation in the Carter Administration's approach to the U.S.–Soviet talks. Although the talks would probably have faltered eventually because of the severely increased tensions in U.S.–Soviet relations, and lack of any signs of restraint from other arms exporters, the timing of the breakdown must be ascribed to the administration's handling of the negotiations and its policy reversals. When Carter chose the political approach as advocated by the majority in the State Department and Brzezinski, other foreign-policy considerations – normalization with China, the disturbances in Iran, the Middle East Peace Process and SALT – had become more important than conventional arms control. This resulted in an uncompromising U.S. stance not even to hear out the Soviet proposals on regions. And that sealed the fate of the CAT talks.

## **Consequences on U.S. unilateral restraint**

In the 1970s, the international arms sales market was characterized by a large and growing number of producers and exporters. The increasing numbers of potential suppliers had, apart from in some special weapons systems, made it a buyers' market. If a recipient was refused weapons from one supplier, he could simply turn to another. This made the U.S. unilateral efforts depend on some kind of multilateral consensus on restraint, and rendered them highly vulnerable if other major suppliers refused to join. As noted, Carter had stated early in his tenure that, for U.S. unilateral arms control to be successful, multilateral agreements with other suppliers were necessary. Unilateral U.S. retreat from the international arms market could be seen as giving ground to its rivals, and this concern increased as U.S.–Soviet relations deteriorated.

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<sup>79</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> "An Interview with Leslie Gelb," *Arms Control Today*, p. 6.

Despite the efforts of the Carter Administration, international arms transfers continued to rise, as the major producers did not follow the U.S. lead and new countries entered the market. The failure to engage the West European producers, especially France and the United Kingdom, proved to have grave consequences. In the absence of multilateral agreements on arms transfer restraint, Washington requested its West European allies in 1978 that they: (1) not fill the void left by U.S. restraint; (2) consult with the U.S.A. before agreeing to new arms transfers; and (3) restrict the sophistication of the weapons they export.<sup>81</sup> These requests were not followed. Even if the Europeans did not export nearly as much as the United States and the Soviet Union, they produced most types of weapons and exported to all regions of the world. The problem became particularly evident in Latin America, where the U.S.A. showed some restraint and European suppliers in many instances seized the opportunity and filled the void. Whereas the three largest arms suppliers in Western Europe (France, the U.K. and West Germany) sold approximately \$6 billion worth of weapons in 1977, arms sales from the same three countries had increased to nearly \$11 billion by 1981.<sup>82</sup>

The ceiling was the most important sign of U.S. restraint to other arms suppliers, and it was the PD-13 control most affected by the failure at reaching cooperation with other suppliers. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff preferred a smaller reduction than the announced eight percent for the fiscal year (FY) 1979 ceiling because of the lack of results in multilateral negotiations and comparable measures by other suppliers,<sup>83</sup> President Carter chose to abide by the promised eight percent reduction. However, he noted in an internal memorandum that further reductions for FY 1980 would 'depend on the degree of cooperation we receive in the coming year from other nations' and that 'making further reductions is dependent on the cooperation + restraint of other suppliers.'<sup>84</sup> When Secretary Vance announced the end of the U.S. ceiling in March 1980, he explained it by the lack of 'agreed international restraint.'<sup>85</sup> Although the lack of cooperation certainly contributed to ending the control, there were also other considerations. The new U.S. security framework for the Persian Gulf region, as

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<sup>81</sup> "Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, Senate, by the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations," *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, Washington D.C., 1983, p. 10.

<sup>82</sup> Values in constant 1987 dollars. ACDA, *WMEAT 1988*, pp. 84-107.

<sup>83</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 13, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 65, "Platt Chron File: 11/1-15/78" folder.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *The Washington Post*, March 29, 1980.

announced by Carter on January 23, 1980 (the Carter Doctrine), was partly based on increased arms transfers to friendly countries in the area. Because the U.S.A. lost its largest arms recipient when the Shah was forced to leave Iran in January 1979, it is possible that the administration could still have reduced the dollar volume of transfers, despite these increased transfers. However, because U.S.–Soviet relations seriously deteriorated from mid-1978, reaching a crisis situation with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, it is unlikely that, even with some kind of international cooperation, the Carter Administration would have pledged itself to further reductions under a ceiling. Under these circumstances it would not have its hands tied by a promise that could impair arms transfers to countries perceived to be important in the superpower competition.

The breakdown of the CAT talks gave more power to the opponents of the restraint policy in the administration and the bureaucracy.<sup>86</sup> Without multilateral cooperation, and with other suppliers filling the vacuum left by U.S. restraint, domestic opposition to the policy gained ground. Arms-sales advocates and defense manufacturers argued that American industry was being hurt, without global arms transactions decreasing. This led to rising pressures to soften the unilateral guidelines. In November 1978, before the demise of the CAT talks, Brzezinski argued that because of the lack of results in multilateral restraint, the whole policy based on PD-13 should be reviewed.<sup>87</sup>

The Carter Administration did not develop a new arms transfer policy. However, as the case studies will show, from the end of 1978, restraint in arms transfers was given less priority in regard to other foreign-policy objectives. This can be ascribed at least in part to the failure of the diplomatic efforts.

## Conclusion

Carter's world order policy, of which the initiative for restraint in arms transfers was a part, has been criticized as naïve, and with the benefit of hindsight, it has been proclaimed unattainable.<sup>88</sup> Was this the case with the efforts to engage the other

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<sup>86</sup> Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, p. 155.

<sup>87</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 21, 1978. JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 42, "Weekly Reports to the President: 71-81, 9/78-12/78" folder.

<sup>88</sup> See for example, Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 623–660; and Robert W. Tucker, *The Purposes of American Power: An Essay on National Security*, New York, 1981.

major arms producers in transfer restraint? To be able to answer this question, we have to separate U.S. diplomatic efforts towards the West European producers from the CAT talks between the two superpowers.

There are few archival sources upon which to base a conclusion on the European initiative. However, it is safe to assume that the manner in which the Carter Administration presented the proposal to the Europeans doomed the effort to failure. France, the United Kingdom, and West Germany depended on arms exports to preserve the viability of their domestic defense industries – and their major customers were precisely the countries where the U.S.A. wanted their cooperation in reducing sales. This was out of the question for the European producers unless they could gain access to new markets. If the U.S.A. had promised to step up Pentagon purchases of European arms, either through co-production of weapons systems or through direct U.S. imports, this could probably have increased the chances of European cooperation. Because European arms transfers were motivated more by economic than by political factors, the European governments would probably have welcomed an invitation to shift more of their exports from Third World countries, which was unpopular with large segments of the public, to their main NATO ally.

The main reasons for the timing of the breakdown of the Conventional Arms Transfer talks with the Soviet Union were disagreements and vacillation in the Carter Administration, limited support for the talks among Carter's main foreign-policy advisers and Washington's unwillingness to even listen to Moscow's suggestions. Although these were the direct reasons for the collapse, the negotiations would probably have broken down anyhow, as a result of the increasing hostility between the two superpowers and the reluctance of the major European producers to restrain their sales. However, if the administration had chosen another negotiation tactic, the talks might have lasted longer, perhaps even producing some results.

The tactic chosen – of seeing the talks as foreign-policy negotiations and acting accordingly – was too ambitious. Given the political dimension of the two countries' arms exports, and because the United States and the Soviet Union rarely sold arms to the same recipients, the two sides were unable to agree on regions for mutual restraint. If the Carter Administration had opted for the less ambitious course favored by Blechman and ACDA, and used the talks as mainly arms control negotiations, that could have increased the chances for positive results. Even though this negotiating

tactic would probably not have led to dramatic reductions in the global trade in arms, it could have brought about understandings on restraining certain types of weapons systems and perhaps have generated further negotiations on more ambitious reductions. Moreover, if the negotiations had led to concrete results, even minor ones, the U.S. unilateral policy would not have become so exposed to domestic criticism, and would probably have had a longer lease on life.

The big question now was if U.S. unilateral arms export restraint could be implemented in the absence of any progress in multilateral and bilateral talks. This is one of the main issues to be discussed in part two of the thesis.



## Part 2: Case studies

### Chapter 4

## Latin America

Shortly after his inauguration, Jimmy Carter stated that his administration would formulate security assistance programs that 'promote and advance respect for human rights in recipient countries.'<sup>1</sup> Respect for human rights was not part of the control mechanisms in PD-13, but it was mentioned in the document; moreover, PD-30 of February 1978, the administration's policy guidelines on human rights, stated that, with regard to U.S. security assistance, 'countries with a poor or deteriorating record will receive less favorable consideration.'<sup>2</sup>

In this case study, all the Latin American countries are grouped together and will be studied as a region rather than as separate states.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this is that Latin American countries have been treated relatively homogeneously with regard to U.S. arms transfer policy, and policy shifts have traditionally been more forcefully implemented here than in other regions. As this and later chapters will show, Carter continued this trend. The chapter will present an overview of how PD-13 was implemented in Latin America, and seek to explain why it was applied more consistently here than in other regions. The case study does not attempt to cover all U.S. arms sales made to Latin America during Carter's term, or even to cover all countries of the region. The countries and arms transfers referred to have been chosen to illustrate a pattern in the Carter Administration's arms transfer policy toward Latin America, and provide examples and support for the answers to the questions raised above.

### Arms transfers to Latin America prior to Carter

The dollar volume of global arms transfers to Latin America in the 1970s was relatively low compared to regions like the Middle East and Africa. Latin America

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<sup>1</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter, 1981*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

<sup>2</sup> Presidential Directive 30 (confidential), February 17, 1978, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 21-40" folder.

<sup>3</sup> 'Latin America' in this thesis refers to all the countries in North and South America located south of the United States.

imported approximately \$1 billion worth of arms in 1976, and the region accounted for 11.5 percent of the worldwide trade in arms. In the same year, the Middle East imported \$6 billion worth of arms, and African countries imported arms worth \$2.7 billion.<sup>4</sup> As in the rest of the Third World, arms exports to Latin America increased during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) identified a 300 percent increase (in constant dollars) in the period 1969 to 1978.<sup>5</sup> Apart from a few scattered instances, Latin America was not a major battleground for Cold War rivalries. This contrasted with most other parts of the world and made arms sales to the region more subject to commercial than strategic considerations.

After the 1959 Cuban revolution, U.S. policy objectives toward the region focused largely on preventing domestic insurgencies.<sup>6</sup> This resulted in increased support to the police and paramilitary forces of several countries, as well as in exports of weapons effective in fighting insurgencies and guerrilla groups, such as police equipment, small arms, helicopters and armored personnel carriers. It had been established U.S. policy not to provide Latin American countries with the most sophisticated weapons, such as jet aircraft and modern missiles, although the Nixon Administration had broken with this practice.<sup>7</sup> Latin America had been the region where the U.S.A. had practiced most restraint in its arms transfers prior to Carter. According to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs John Bushnell, much of Carter's global arms sales policy drew 'heavily on policies we have practiced toward Latin America for years.'<sup>8</sup> Due to U.S. restraint, Latin American countries had turned to other exporters, and all the world's major arms producers were exporting to the region. The U.S.A. was the single largest supplier of arms to Latin America when Carter took office, but Canada, France, Italy, Israel, the Soviet Union, West Germany, and the United Kingdom, all had sizeable arms export programs for the region. The largest military powers in Latin America – Argentina and

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<sup>4</sup> Values in constant 1977 dollars. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1969–1978, Washington D.C., 1980, pp. 117–119.

<sup>5</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1981*, London, 1981, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Arnson and Michael T. Klare, *Supplying Repression: US Support for Authoritarian Regimes Abroad*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> The Nixon Administration sold the governments of Brazil and Chile F-5E supersonic fighters.

<sup>8</sup> *Arms Trade in the Western Hemisphere: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives*, June 27, 28; July 19, 20; and August 2 and 9, 1978, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 2.

Brazil – had also developed indigenous arms production capabilities, and were producing and exporting weapons systems such as counter-insurgency aircraft, helicopters, tanks, anti-tank missiles, frigates and even submarines. In addition, Chile and Venezuela had built small-scale weapons industries during the 1970s.<sup>9</sup>

## **Carter's arms transfer policy toward Latin America**

Perhaps with the exception of John F. Kennedy, Carter paid more attention to Latin America than any other previous post-World War II president. He spoke Spanish, had lived relatively close to the Mexican border, and had visited several Latin American countries. According to a leading expert, 'Jimmy Carter was the first U.S. president to forge a policy [toward Latin America] of his own choosing in the absence of a security crisis, or as it turned out, before rather than after a crisis.'<sup>10</sup> In addition to solving the Panama Canal problems, Carter's main objective for his Latin America policy was to improve the human rights situation in the region. Human rights abuses by the region's governments had probably never been as grave and widespread as they were in 1977.<sup>11</sup> Carter's human rights initiative towards Latin America was highly popular among Democrats and centrist Republicans. Conservative Republicans, however, argued against criticizing U.S.A.-friendly regimes for human rights violations.

In contrast to U.S. policy towards several other regions and countries, such as China, the Horn of Africa and Iran, there was little internal disagreement among top administration officials over policy toward Latin America.<sup>12</sup> Differences of opinion were, however, apparent at the lower levels of the administration and in the bureaucracy. The recently established State Department Human Rights Bureau was in constant dispute with the Latin American Bureau and its country desks. The regional Bureau – made up mostly of career bureaucrats, as opposed to the Human Rights Bureau, where a majority came from the outside – generally advocated against cutting arms transfers and security assistance to governments because of human

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 232; and SIPRI, *SIPRI Yearbook 1981*, p. 114

<sup>10</sup> John D. Martz, *United States Policy in Latin America: A Quarter Century of Crisis and Challenge, 1961–1986*, London, 1988, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> See Richard R. Fagen, "The Carter Administration and Latin America: Business as Usual?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1978, p. 658. Fagen writes: 'At no time in history [as of 1977] of the hemisphere had the incidence of military rule been so high, the gross violations of political and individual rights so widespread, and the use of officially sponsored assassination, torture and brutality so systematic.'

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Pastor, *Exiting the Whirlpool: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Latin America and the Caribbean*, Boulder, CO, 2001, pp. 41–42.

rights violations, and argued that such sales and grants could be used as a positive leverage to improve the regimes' human rights standards.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the Human Rights Bureau, because of the agency's characteristics and priorities, advocated using arms as a negative leverage: recipient governments would need to show positive signs of human rights improvement before the U.S.A. should supply it with military equipment. Carter's Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Security Assistance, Stephen Cohen, reported in 1982 about one incidence where the Latin America Bureau distorted information about summary killings by the Argentinean security forces. The Bureau had stated that 'at most, hundreds of individuals had been summarily executed by the security forces,' and 'that only Marxist terrorists were the victims.' According to Cohen, the correct figure was 6,500 or more and 'the victims were neither Marxists nor terrorists.'<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after his inauguration, Carter began implementing his human rights and arms transfer policies toward Latin America. On February 24, 1977, following a recommendation by an interagency committee on human rights, chaired by Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance announced before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations that security assistance to three military governments would be reduced because of human rights violations.<sup>15</sup> Two of these were Latin American.<sup>16</sup> Argentina would have its military credits reduced from \$48 million in fiscal year 1977 to \$15 million in fiscal year 1978, and Uruguay would lose all its military credits.<sup>17</sup> These actions bore evidence that the Carter Administration would behave differently from previous administrations on security assistance to human rights violators in Latin America. However, both of these actions built on Congressional precedent; even if the administration tried publicly to take credit for the cuts, it was admitted internally that 'the credit for the cut in Uruguay's program belongs to them [Congress] and not the Administration,' and that

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, New York, 1993, p. 211.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen B. Cohen, "Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices," *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 76, No. 2, 1982, p. 259.

<sup>15</sup> *Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations, Fiscal Year 1978: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance and Related Programs of the Committee on Appropriations, the Senate*, February 24, 1977, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 196; and memorandum (executive), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, March 8, 1977, JCL, White House Central Files [henceforth WHCF], FO-25, "FO 3-2 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>16</sup> The third country, Ethiopia, would keep its credits, but lose the military grants. See chapter 10.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum (executive), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, March 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-25, "FO 3-2 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

the cut for Argentina 'is a significant step, but is not enough.'<sup>18</sup> Although these actions were largely based on Congressional initiatives, Carter's policy marked a change. In divergence from Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon, who had ignored or vetoed most of the legislative efforts to restrain arms transfers to human rights violators in Latin America, Carter was following the wishes of a majority in the Congress on this issue.

Complying with the law, the Department of State in the spring of 1977 provided Congress with a report on the human rights situation in all countries receiving U.S. security assistance. This report criticized Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Uruguay for serious human rights violations. Thus, as a consequence of its professed human rights policy, the administration prepared to cut back military aid. This angered the leaders of those countries, who felt the U.S.A. was unacceptably intervening in their domestic affairs; and before the Carter Administration could reach decisions on reductions, all six countries responded by suspending their security assistance relationships with the U.S.A.<sup>19</sup>

A less noted aspect of Carter's arms transfer restraint policy than the cuts in military assistance and the arms sales refusals is his administration's substantial reduction of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program for Latin America. Prior to Carter, Latin America had received more US-sponsored military training than any other region. From the program's creation in 1950, 81,000 Latin American officers were trained in the U.S.A. and at bases in Panama.<sup>20</sup> Carter slashed IMET funding for Latin America – from over \$10 million in 1976 to \$2.5 million in 1980.<sup>21</sup> From the 1960s, the training had been mostly based on counter-insurgency warfare against guerrilla groups, and the officers who were trained often represented governments known for widespread violations of human rights. The major rationale behind U.S. training of foreign officers was that it provided the U.S.A. with direct connections with the military in the recipient country, thereby increasing U.S. influence. Therefore, by reducing U.S. training of Latin American soldiers, Carter

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<sup>18</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Jessica Tuchman and Robert M. Kimmitt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, February 7, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 10-32, "Human Rights, 2-4/77" folder.

<sup>19</sup> Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 211.

<sup>20</sup> Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and U.S. Policy Toward Latin America*, Princeton, NJ, 1981, p. 230.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [Henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, p. 56.

showed that he was willing to sacrifice influence in military regimes, for the purpose of promoting human rights.

Carter pursued his promise to apply human rights in his foreign policy with some vigor in Latin America. In certain periods, arms transfers were suspended to Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Uruguay.<sup>22</sup> Although the Carter Administration showed restraint in Latin America, there also were several instances where arms transfer control and human rights policies were disregarded.

Guatemala may serve as an example. The Guatemalans had legally elected President Kjell Laugerud Garcia, but the government was subject to control by military officers. The military were repeatedly involved in serious human rights offenses themselves and through proxy by private death squads, and were believed to have killed thousands of innocent people in the recent past.<sup>23</sup> Government-to-government arms sales to Guatemala were reduced from about \$3 million in fiscal year 1976 to about 2.3 million in fiscal year 1980.<sup>24</sup> However, commercial arms sales to the country reached new heights during Carter's tenure.<sup>25</sup> Even if commercial agreements tended to be much smaller in dollar value than government-brokered sales, arms connected with human rights violations – such as small arms and crowd-control equipment – were usually sold through this channel. In his official statement on the arms transfer policy, Carter had said that commercial sales would not be affected by the policy, because they 'are already significantly restrained by existing legislation and executive branch policy.'<sup>26</sup> However, it is likely that decision-making on commercial sales requests was not seriously affected by PD-13. Because commercial sales agreements were usually smaller and involved less sophisticated arms than government sales, they were normally handled by the bureaucracy, which has traditionally been less receptive to policy changes than administration officials. Supporting this assumption

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<sup>22</sup> Cohen, "Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices," p. 270.

<sup>23</sup> "Latin Requests to Buy F5s Put U.S. in Policy Bind," *The Washington Post*, January 31, 1978, pp. 1 and 11; and Cohen, "Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices," p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Lisa L. Martin and Kathryn Sikkink, "U.S. Policy and Human Rights in Argentina and Guatemala, 1973–1980," in Peter B. Evans, Harold K. Jacobson and Robert D. Putnam, eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy*, Los Angeles, 1993, p. 341; and DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, pp. 12 and 34.

<sup>26</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, May 19, 1977, *Public Papers of the President*, p. 932.

is the fact that the value of commercial arms sales licenses increased from \$1.4 billion in fiscal year 1976 to \$1.9 billion in fiscal year 1980.<sup>27</sup>

Another country where Carter broke with his stated human rights policy as attached to arms sales considerations was Nicaragua. Carter ignored reports about repression and massacres by the Somoza regime, and supplied it with \$2.5 million worth of arms in 1977 for use in the fight against the left-wing Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).<sup>28</sup> However, following persistent reports of increased torture, arbitrary arrests, and killings by the government, Carter cut military aid and banned all arms sales to the country, starting in fiscal year 1978. This was done despite heavy lobbying pressure from members of Congress supportive of the regime in Managua, and a 225-to-180 House vote for continuing the security assistance.<sup>29</sup> Thus, in the case of Nicaragua, Carter proved responsive to information on a deteriorating human rights situation, and took the advice of the Human Rights Bureau to follow a strategy of using negative leverage.

Although U.S. foreign policy in general and arms transfer policy in particular towards other countries of the Western hemisphere were less influenced by deteriorating U.S.-Soviet relations and were more consistent than in the case of other regions, Latin America was not totally unaffected by changes in superpower relations. According to a 2001 book by Brzezinski's staff assistant for Latin America, Robert Pastor, the Carter Administration in its last two years 'was compelled to address [towards Latin America] a more traditional security agenda as the old world of superpower competition and balance-of-power geopolitics returned.'<sup>30</sup> This resulted in the administration becoming more concerned with crisis management in countries like Cuba, El Salvador, Grenada, and Nicaragua, and it put to test 'the principles that Carter had outlined at the beginning of his term.'<sup>31</sup> Among these principles was arms transfer restraint: the administration concluded some controversial transfer agreements with Latin American countries during its final two years. Complying with control 2 of PD-13, which restricted the sophistication of arms for export, the Carter Administration in mid-1977 turned down a request from Ecuador for F-5 fighters.

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<sup>27</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 26; and DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Lafeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, p. 230.

<sup>29</sup> Letter (executive), John M. Murphy to the President, July 6, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-31, "FO 3-2/CO 144 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>30</sup> Pastor, *Exiting the Whirlpool*, p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

However, in 1979, Carter agreed to a request from the same country to purchase sophisticated surface-to-air missiles and the Vulcan anti-aircraft gun; and in 1980, accepted a Mexican request for F-5E jet fighters.<sup>32</sup> These sales broke with standard U.S. arms sales policy to Latin America and PD-13, and support Pastor's analysis that the arms sales policy toward some Latin American countries was implemented more forcefully during the first half of Carter's presidency.

Carter also changed his position on selling jet fighters to the region. In 1977, the Israelis had been denied a request to sell Ecuador 24 Kfir fighter aircraft. The aircraft contained the General Electric J79 engine, of US manufacture, and the Department of State could therefore veto the third-country sale. According to an unnamed State Department official, the justification for the refusal was that such a sale would 'run counter to our policy against the sale of advanced and sophisticated aircraft to Latin America.'<sup>33</sup> In 1980, however, the Israelis were given permission to export the same plane to Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. These approvals were probably related to the administration's 1980 decision to abandon control 3 of PD-13 and allow U.S. defense manufacturers to produce a fighter solely for export: this was the FX. Latin America was believed to offer an important market for FX fighters, and Carter would therefore not forbid another country to export a similar plane to the region.

Despite the arms transfer approvals mentioned above, Carter implemented PD-13 with relative consistency in Latin America. During Carter's term of office, the region's global arms purchases continued to increase, but U.S. arms transfers to the region decreased. Whereas total U.S. sales agreements made under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program to Latin America reached \$174 million in 1975, they dropped to \$83 million in 1978 and \$32 million by 1980.<sup>34</sup> Because this was the region where the arms transfer restraint policy was implemented most vigorously, it was also the region where Washington's failure to produce multilateral agreements on restraint became most visible. When the major arms-producing governments of Europe responded negatively to multilateral restraint in early 1977, the Carter Administration asked them not to fill the gap created by U.S. reductions. This recommendation was not followed in Latin America, and both West European countries and the Soviet Union seized on the possibilities emerging from U.S. restraint. While total arms

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<sup>32</sup> Michael T. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, Austin, TX, 1984, pp. 94-95.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in: "U.S. Approves Israeli Bid to Sell Jets," *The Washington Star*, October 31, 1980.

<sup>34</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, pp. 3-4.



imports in Latin America had been about \$1.5 billion in 1976, they reached \$2.8 billion in 1981.<sup>35</sup>

There are several examples of other exporters filling the void left by U.S. restraint in Latin America. When Carter vetoed an Israeli request to sell Kfir fighters to Ecuador in early February 1977, Ecuador instead purchased Mirage F-1 jets from France. The F-1 is a more sophisticated weapons system than the F-5; thus, in this instance, U.S. restraint actually had a negative effect on the arms balance in the region. Argentina, the country hardest hit by U.S. restraint, turned to other producers and imported sophisticated arms from France, Germany and Israel.<sup>36</sup> While Argentina purchased \$78 million worth of arms in 1976, the value increased to \$244 million in 1979.<sup>37</sup> Thus, despite U.S. restraint, the military regime in Buenos Aires managed to obtain weapons. Brazil, after being threatened with reductions in U.S. assistance and then itself canceling the security supporting relationship, also found willing providers in Western Europe. Brazil established joint ventures for production of jet and transport aircraft, helicopters, tanks and missiles with France, Italy and West Germany,<sup>38</sup> thereby becoming less dependent upon arms purchases from the U.S.A., and a considerable arms exporter itself. Because of the Somoza regime's unwillingness to compromise and negotiate peace with the Sandinistas, all military aid from the U.S.A. to Nicaragua was cut off in 1978. But also Nicaragua found other suppliers, especially Guatemala and Israel.<sup>39</sup> However, when the Carter Administration turned down Guatemala's request for F-5 fighters on the grounds that it would have broken control of PD-13 and introduced 'for the first time a supersonic, high performance aircraft into Central America,<sup>40</sup> no other arms supplier filled the request.<sup>41</sup>

## **Executive-legislative interaction**

Congressional attitudes towards the region are important factors in explaining the Carter Administration's decisions on arms transfers to Latin America. It is therefore

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<sup>35</sup> Values in constant 1982 dollars. ACDA, *WMEAT*, 1985, p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> Paul L. Ferrari, Jeffrey W. Knopf and Raúl L. Madrid, *US Arms Exports: Policies and Contractors*, Washington D.C., 1987, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Values in constant 1982 dollars. ACDA, *WMEAT* 1985, p. 95.

<sup>38</sup> "Europeans Seek Arms Deal in Brazil," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 1978, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," in Howard L. Wiarda, ed., *Human Rights and U.S. Human Rights Policy: Theoretical Approaches and Some Perspectives on Latin America*, Washington D.C., 1982, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Arms Trade in the Western Hemisphere*, p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Ferrari et al., *US Arms Exports*, p. 25.

necessary to examine to what degree the Executive Branch's policy was made on its own initiative, and how much was forced on it by legislative action.

During the late 1960s and into the 1970s human rights concerns in Congress grew. This focus on human rights coincided with and was partly a result of the worsening human rights situation in several Latin American countries at the same time as U.S. arms transfers to the region were on the rise. Military rulers came to power through coups in Chile and Uruguay in 1973, and in Argentina in 1976; and there were widespread reports on grave government-sponsored abuses in the region. Military security assistance to human rights violators in Latin America, which increased during the Presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford,<sup>42</sup> was by many seen as implicating the U.S.A. in these atrocities by supplying the means of repression. Several legislators, especially from the Democratic Party, wanted to restrict or stop altogether U.S. transfers of military equipment to these regimes.

In 1976, the Democratic-controlled Congress amended the Arms Export Control Act in terms of explicitly linking transfers of military equipment with human rights situations in the receiving country. According to section 502B of the amended Act, security assistance was to be denied to countries engaging in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.<sup>43</sup> However, that provision was totally disregarded by the Executive Branch during Henry Kissinger's time as Secretary of State.<sup>44</sup> This disregard of Legislative wishes made Congress apply country-specific legislation.<sup>45</sup> At various times from 1974 and throughout Carter's presidency, Congress reduced and/or prohibited military aid and sales of defense material and training to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay because of human rights violations. Thus, in deciding on many arms transfer requests, Carter had no choice but to comply with Congress.

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<sup>42</sup> In the period FY 1971 to FY 1975, Government brokered arms sales agreements to Latin America increased from \$48 million to \$179 million, foreign military sales credits increased from \$50 million to \$133 million, and the value of commercial sales licenses increased from \$15 million to \$21 million. All values in current dollars. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, pp. 5, 21 and 33.

<sup>43</sup> Congressional Research Service, *United States Arms Transfer and Security Assistance Program*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Max Holland, "The Myth of Arms Restraint," *Congressional Record – Senate*, July 9, 1979, p. 8940.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Like his predecessors, Carter complained about the constraints forced upon him by Congress, and argued that foreign policy was better off handled by the Executive Branch.<sup>46</sup> Despite this criticism, Carter at times went further in his human rights policy than mandated by Congress. Whereas previous presidents had been pressured in this area, and regularly ignored the wishes of Congress, the Executive during Carter's presidency took the lead in imposing arms transfer sanctions because of human rights violations. The most noteworthy example of this was the case of Argentina. During the Ford Administration, Congress had proposed cutbacks in security assistance to the country, but the President had resisted these because he believed a deterioration in U.S.-Argentinean relations would reduce U.S. power in Latin America.<sup>47</sup> Then, in July 1977, Congress passed a resolution, effective from 30 September 1978, banning all forms of U.S. deliveries of military material to Argentina because of human rights abuses. The Argentineans were given a 'year-long grace period,' during which they requested US arms worth \$100 million.<sup>48</sup> Most of these requests, however, were refused by the White House because of lack of human rights improvements by the Argentinean government.<sup>49</sup> Although Carter could make this decision with the knowledge that it would produce little dissent in Congress, this also showed that, under the right conditions, his human rights policy was not mere empty campaign rhetoric.

The human rights and arms sales policies toward Latin America in the period 1977 to 1981 are best explained as a result of executive-legislative interaction. This was acknowledged by the administration, as illustrated by a statement by John Bushnell in 1978: 'Our policies on arms transfers to Latin America have evolved in close cooperation with the Congress. Indeed, some of our procedures are designed specifically to insure compliance with congressional mandates.'<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Douglas J. Bennett, "Congress in Foreign Policy: Who Needs it?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 1978, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Schoultz, *Human Rights and U.S. Policy Toward Latin America*, p. 221.

<sup>48</sup> Martin and Sikkink, "U.S. Policy and Human Rights in Argentina and Guatemala, 1973-1980," p. 335.

<sup>49</sup> *Arms Trade in the Western Hemisphere*, p. 26.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

## Conclusion

As later chapters will show, the Latin American governments bore the brunt of the Carter Administration's arms transfer reductions policy.<sup>51</sup> This became apparent early on. A look at the record of the administration's implementation of its human rights and arms transfer policy shows that PD-13 was more forcefully implemented in Latin America than anywhere else, and that few other governments were penalized with cuts in security assistance on the basis of human right violations.

The case of Latin America demonstrates that arms sales restraint could be achieved, if certain conditions were present. The principal condition for the relative success of PD-13 in Latin America was the region's presumed little importance to U.S. geostrategic security strategy and the lack of internal and external opposition to the forceful implementation of a restraint policy. A central factor was probably that none of the Latin American countries supplied the U.S.A. with important raw materials, bordered on the Soviet Union or defended critical U.S. security interests in the region. The Carter Administration could implement its human rights policy with some vigor and reduce arms transfers to the region without serious concern for national security consequences. Thus, if Carter wished to live up to the picture he had drawn of himself as a defender of global human rights and conventional arms control, Latin America was the region where he could most easily do so without jeopardizing vital U.S. security interests. Connected to this condition was the lack of superpower confrontation in Latin America. Although the "discovery" of a Soviet brigade in Cuba in the summer of 1979<sup>52</sup> and the conflict in Nicaragua caused unease and were frequently discussed within the U.S. Administration, Latin America was not at the center of the renewed Cold War from late 1978. Therefore, in contrast to some other countries where the administration showed restraint early in the period, but later increased arms exports, Carter could continue the policy of restraint to Latin America throughout his term of office.

The lack of opposition was also important for the implementation of PD-13 to Latin America. Senior foreign policy officials who opposed a policy of restraint to other countries, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski and Harold Brown, were less active with regard

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<sup>51</sup> This assertion is in concordance with a 1978 RAND report. See *Arms Trade in the Western Hemisphere*, p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> For a comprehensive report on the Soviet brigade in Cuba, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation. American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington D.C., 1985, pp. 913-934.

to Latin America. Other agencies, among them the State Department's Human Rights Bureau and Office of Politico-Military Affairs, which were more inclined toward restraint than the National Security Council staff and Pentagon, had more power over Latin America decision-making. Externally, as mentioned, Carter followed Congressional aspirations in reducing arms transfers to human rights violators in Latin America, and was not subjected to much criticism from Capitol Hill because of arms transfer rejections or cuts in military aid.

As the following case studies will show, the conditions that promoted restraint in arms transfers to Latin America were also apparent in some other countries, but not to the same degree, and not throughout Carter's presidency.

## Chapter 5

# Pakistan

Pakistan is a case of importance because Carter significantly reduced U.S. arms transfers to that country. While the preceding Ford Administration had sold Pakistan close to \$99 million worth of military equipment in 1976, sales were only \$40 million in 1978 and \$22 million in 1979.<sup>1</sup> However, in December 1979, Carter made a major policy change and offered the Pakistani President Mohammed Zia ul-Haq an arms package worth \$400 million. In view of this policy change, it is easy to forget that Carter had in fact followed a policy of arms transfer restraint to Pakistan during his first three years in the White House. This case study will compare the arms transfer policy to Pakistan in the period of 1977–79 with decisions made in Carter’s last year in office under the influence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

## Background

In 1954, the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower had initiated a military assistance program for Pakistan. In the following period, most of the arms exported to Pakistan by the U.S.A. were supplied through grants and credits, and the U.S.A. became Pakistan’s main arms supplier.<sup>2</sup> Five years later, in 1959, Washington and Islamabad formalized their strategic relationship in a security agreement. However, because of the 1965 war between Pakistan and India over Kashmir, Lyndon Johnson embargoed all arms transfers to the two adversaries. In 1975, Gerald Ford lifted the embargo and allowed arms sales to both India and Pakistan through the Foreign Military Sales program, although he maintained the ban on military grants. By then, however, Pakistan had lost some of its strategic importance for Washington, as the U.S.A. had developed close security relationships with other countries in the region, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. For that reason, and because of the relatively high cost of U.S. armaments, U.S. arms transfers to Pakistan did not return to the levels they had enjoyed in the early 1960s, until the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

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<sup>1</sup> Values in current dollars. U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance*, 1980 edition, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947–2000*, Washington D.C., 2001, p. 217.

## **Carter's arms transfer policy toward Pakistan 1977-79**

In the period from 1977 to late 1979, the Carter Administration did not perceive Pakistan to be of great strategic or political significance. Iran and Saudi Arabia were the main U.S. partners in Southwest Asia. In addition, Carter sought to improve U.S. relations with India, something which precluded close security relations with Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> The human rights situation in Pakistan also impeded Carter from improving relations with Islamabad. When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was overthrown on July 5, 1977 by the military regime of Mohammed Zia ul-Haq, Carter's skepticism toward the Pakistani authorities increased.

Pakistan's nuclear program also strained U.S.-Pakistani relations. Pakistan, a non-signatory to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, had initiated a secret nuclear weapons program in 1971. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were among Carter's main foreign policy objectives during the election campaign and well into his tenure. His declared position on disarmament could hardly be compatible with a major security assistance relationship with a country about to "go nuclear." In addition, Congress had, through the Glenn and Symington Amendments to U.S. international aid regulations, prohibited economic and military assistance to countries believed to be developing nuclear weapons. Consequently, all U.S. aid to Pakistan was terminated in August 1978.

### **Jet fighter requests**

In 1976, Pakistan had requested the purchase of 110 Vought Corporation A-7 Corsair fighter-bombers, and late in the same year, both the Departments of State and Defense recommended that the request be approved.<sup>4</sup> However, the Ford Administration did not reach a conclusion, and the matter was left for decision to the incoming administration. Carter rejected the request in June 1977, two weeks after his announcement of the new arms transfer restraint policy. Carter justified the decision on the grounds that the sale would have broken with control 2 of PD-13, because the A-7 was 'more sophisticated than the fighter-bombers in use in South Asia,' and that such a transfer would have introduced 'a new or significantly higher

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Perry Thornton, "Between the Stools?: U.S. Policy towards Pakistan during the Carter Administration," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 22, No. 10, 1982, p. 960.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Changing Perspectives on U.S. Arms Transfer Policy*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 72; and Michael D. Mosettig, "Military Sales: More Cooperation But a Lot More Competition," *Europe*, May-June 1980, p. 24.

combat capability' to the region.<sup>5</sup> Carter further argued that the sale of A-7s to Pakistan would upset the military balance and might provoke an arms race in South Asia – exactly what control 2 was supposed to curb. In addition, Carter wished to continue the policy followed by Washington since 1965 and avoid making the U.S.A. a major arms supplier to the Indian subcontinent.<sup>6</sup>

A 1981 report by the Congressional Research Service, which was critical to Carter's arms transfer policy, speculated that the A-7 refusal was not a result of the restraint policy: rather, it was an effect of the administration's objective of improving relations with India and pressuring Islamabad to constrain its nuclear program.<sup>7</sup> A sale would probably have produced criticism in New Delhi, and would have been contrary to Carter's public announcements that he would work against proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, although there were other factors weighing against the sale, the decision was probably guided by, and was definitely in concordance with, Carter's arms transfer restraint policy. Arms transfer requests are never decided in a vacuum: there are always multiple considerations behind either a refusal or an acceptance. Therefore, to conclude that PD-13 did not play a role in the administration's decision-making on this request, just because the refusal also harmonized with other objectives, is an over-simplification. The Carter Administration's arms transfer policy toward India also supports the argument that refusals of Pakistani arms requests were guided by the wish to avoid an arms race in Southwest Asia, and not only by the objective of improving U.S.-Indian relations. Shortly after refusing the Pakistani request for A-7s, Carter prohibited Sweden from selling to India SAAB Viggen fighter aircraft, which are equipped with US components, on the grounds that such a sale would have broken with control 2 of PD-13, which restricted third-country transfers of U.S.-origin military equipment.<sup>8</sup> The timing of the refusal might also have been of importance for the outcome. As noted, the decision was taken only two weeks after the public announcement of the new arms transfer policy. Lucy Wilson Benson, Under-Secretary of State for Security Assistance, referred to the A-7 turndown as the

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<sup>5</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Dale Milford, August 22, 1977, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], White House Central Files [henceforth WHCF], FO-31, "FO 3-2/CO 119 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Changing Perspectives on U.S. Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> See Paul L. Ferrari, Jeffrey W. Knopf, and Raúl L. Madrid, *U.S. Arms Exports: Policies and Contractors*, Washington D.C., 1987, p. 25; and Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 55.



first product of the new policy.<sup>9</sup> This was a good opportunity for Carter to show the U.S. public and other major arms suppliers that he was serious in his objective of reducing global arms transfers.

As was shown in the chapter on Latin America, the Carter Administration showed some willingness to restrain arms transfers to countries perceived as being not particularly strategically important. Although Pakistan probably loomed more important in U.S. security strategy than Latin America, Carter could implement PD-13 toward Pakistan without risks of seriously deteriorating his country's political or security standing in the region.

### **Carter's arms transfer policy toward Pakistan 1979-80**

As a direct result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the Carter Administration changed its policy toward Pakistan dramatically – in a manner historian Gaddis Smith calls 'from ostracism to courtship.'<sup>10</sup> While ostracism might be a too strong expression for the U.S. treatment of Pakistan prior to the crisis in Afghanistan, to describe the treatment after 25 December 1980 as courtship is instructive. From strongly criticizing Zia ul-Haq for his government's human rights violations, especially after the execution of the last elected president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in April 1979, Carter in October 1980 began to court Zia ul-Haq, telling him 'that the people of the United States have the greatest admiration for the courage of the people and the leaders of the great nation of Pakistan,' and that ul-Haq had 'shown by all his actions the political leadership and its worth not only to the people of Pakistan but to that entire troubled region and to our country as well.'<sup>11</sup> From being treated as a country on the periphery of Washington's security interests, Pakistan was overnight regarded as one the most important bulwarks against a possible attempt by the Soviet Union to gain control over the whole of Southwest Asia. Grant military assistance was the most important component of the Carter Administration's effort at gaining increased influence in the country.

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<sup>9</sup> *Department of State Bulletin*, 1 August 1977, p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years*, New York, 1986, p. 231.

<sup>11</sup> Statement by Jimmy Carter at a joint press conference with Zia ul-Haq, October 3, 1980, Washington D.C. U.S. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, Washington D.C., 1983, pp. 908-909.

Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, had by late 1979 become the President's most influential adviser on U.S. policy in South Asia. In a memorandum to Carter dated 26 December 1979, one day after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Brzezinski spelled out much of what would be Carter's future policy toward Pakistan and the region as a whole. In what with hindsight may seem an exaggeration of Soviet intents,<sup>12</sup> Brzezinski speculated: 'if the Soviets succeed in Afghanistan, and if Pakistan acquiesces, the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean will have been fulfilled.'<sup>13</sup> He further warned: 'Soviet "decisiveness" will be contrasted with our restraint, which will no longer be labeled as prudent but increasingly as timid.' Because of Soviet intimidation, Pakistan could 'eventually acquiesce to some form of external Soviet domination.'<sup>14</sup> To avoid complete Soviet dominance of the region, Brzezinski strongly recommended that Carter change his policy toward Pakistan and offer 'more guarantees to it, more arms aid, and, alas, a decision that our security policy toward Pakistan cannot be dictated by our nonproliferation policy.'<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the case of several other U.S. arms transfer agreements made under Carter, there was consensus in the administration on the importance of supplying Pakistan with a large arms package following the Soviet actions in Afghanistan. In January 1980, Carter sent Congress a preliminary notification that it was ready to waive the Glenn and Symington amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act because U.S. national security interests were at stake.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it was not only the conventional arms transfer restraint policy that was affected by the renewal of superpower competition in Third World countries, but also Carter's objective of containing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Shortly after Carter had learned of the Soviet invasion, he offered Zia ul-Haq military grants.<sup>17</sup> Pakistani authorities, who had long sought access to modern U.S. military equipment like the A-7 fighter, presented Washington with a list of sophisticated equipment worth \$2 billion. The most controversial weapons system on this wish list

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<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on Soviet motives behind the invasion of Afghanistan, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation. American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington, D.C., 1985, pp. 1023-1046.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, December 26, 1979, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 17, "Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf-Afghanistan: 12/26/79-1/4/80" folder.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the Vice President et al., January 2, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 17, "Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf-Afghanistan: 12/26/79-1/4/80" folder.

<sup>17</sup> Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947-2000*, p. 245.

was General Dynamic's F-16 Fighting Falcon air-combat fighter. The Pakistanis considered the willingness of the Carter Administration to supply F-16s as the litmus test of U.S. seriousness to support Pakistan against the Soviet threat.<sup>18</sup> However, Carter did not acquiesce, and instead offered Islamabad a package of \$400 million, to be divided equally between military equipment and economic aid over a two-year period. The package did not include F-16s or any other sophisticated fighter aircraft. Thereupon the Pakistani president dismissed this proposal as 'peanuts,' and threatened that if Pakistan were to be lost to Soviet influence, 'you will find that you have not one inch of soil where America can have influence – right from Turkey down to Vietnam.'<sup>19</sup>

As a result of Zia ul-Haq's unwillingness to cooperate, Carter in February 1980 up his offer to \$500 million worth of military equipment. The administration also planned to develop a 'military consortium' which would include, in addition to the U.S.A., Saudi Arabia, Japan, China, France, and Great Britain, to supply Pakistan with military equipment.<sup>20</sup> However, the Pakistanis were still not more forthcoming. When Zia ul-Haq visited the White House on October 3, 1980, Pakistani authorities were expecting – rightly – that the Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan would win the impending election. On the basis of Reagan's publicly stated objective of stemming global Soviet adventurism, they calculated that they would be able to persuade Reagan to enlarge the arms package. After all, if Carter won, they would still have his original offer. Although Carter eventually approved the request for F-16s, Zia ul-Haq rejected the new proposal for an arms package, because he believed Pakistan had nothing to lose by waiting for the result of the election.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

Prior to late 1979, the conditions were present for implementing PD-13 toward Pakistan. The country was not considered crucial to U.S. security interests; other foreign policy objectives corresponded with a policy of restraint; and there was no major opposition – within the administration or in Congress – to a policy of restraint.

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<sup>18</sup> Special Coordination Committee (sensitive), January 17, 1980, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 32, "Meetings—SCC 254: 1/1/80" folder.

<sup>19</sup> "Pakistani Dismiss \$400 Million in Aid Offered By U.S. as 'Peanuts'," *The New York Times*, January 18, 1980, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Talking points for Harold Brown on his Trip to Beijing in January 1980 (secret), the National Security Archive, *China and the United States, 1960–1998*, Fiche 97, Document 479; and Special Coordination Committee (sensitive), January 17, 1980, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 32, "Meetings—SCC 254: 1/1/80" folder.

<sup>21</sup> Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947–2000*, p. 254.

A majority in Congress supported refusals of Pakistani arms requests for the same reasons as Carter: the Pakistani government's nuclear arms policy; the regime's human rights violations; and because of the militarily tense situation on the Indian sub-continent. Important is also the fact that, as with the case of Latin America, Carter had inherited a policy that constrained arms transfers to Pakistan. There is no indication in White House documents that Carter would have changed his arms transfer policy toward Pakistan had it not been for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The arms transfer restraint policy toward Pakistan was shelved in response to new security considerations from late 1979. Unlike the case in Latin America, where the Carter Administration showed restraint in arms transfers throughout the entire period, PD-13 was implemented toward Pakistan only during the first three years of Carter's term in office. The conditions which made restraint possible until late 1979, were still present throughout 1980, but they were now overshadowed by another objective: halting Moscow's expansion of its influence in Southwest Asia. Despite having abandoned PD-13 in U.S. arms transfer policy to Pakistan in 1980, Carter still showed restraint compared with the actions of his successor. On 15 June 1981, the Reagan Administration announced that it would provide Pakistan with \$3 billion in military and economic assistance over a six-year period. In addition, Pakistan was offered 40 F-16s, to be financed by Saudi Arabia.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pakistan became the third non-NATO country, after Israel and Egypt, to receive F-16s. See Robert G. Wirsing and James M. Roherty, "The United States and Pakistan," *International Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 1982, p. 588; and Congressional Research Service, *Changing Perspectives on U.S. Arms Transfer Policy*, p. 74.

## Chapter 6

# Iran

As a result of increased oil production and higher petroleum prices, the Iranian economy grew in the 1970s. The increased wealth provided Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi with the finances to upgrade the Iranian military forces. Because Iran served U.S. interests in the strategically important Persian Gulf, Washington was more than willing to supply the Shah with the armaments he requested. From the early 1970s until the fall of the Shah in January 1979, the Iranian government spent approximately 30 percent of its annual budgets on military expenditures.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of Carter's inauguration, Iran had become one of the leading military powers in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region. It was also the largest recipient of U.S. weapons – and it was not exempt from the guidelines in PD-13. Therefore, Iran can serve as an important test of how the Carter Administration applied its broad export policies to specific sales decisions. The June 1977 decision to provide Iran with seven AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft was the first controversial arms sale by the new administration and one of its first major foreign-policy battles with Congress. Several of the controls of PD-13 were relevant for the Iranian arms requests: the ceiling as well as the promises not to be the first to introduce more advanced weapons into a region, not to export weapons to gross violators of human rights, and to consider the economic impact on the arms-purchasing country.

Iran is the first test case as to whether PD-13 had any influence over decision-making on arms transfers to countries with great strategic importance. This chapter will present the major arms sales decisions toward Iran, discuss whether Carter showed arms sales restraint toward this country, and explain why the new arms transfer policy did not prevent the AWACS sale.

## U.S.–Iranian relations prior to Carter

Washington had been heavily involved in Iranian politics since the CIA-instigated coup of 1953 that overthrew the Mossadeq government and brought back the Shah from

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1969–1978, Washington D.C., 1980, p. 52.

exile. In 1968, the United Kingdom militarily withdrew from east of Suez. As a response, the U.S.A. devised a new security strategy for the region, and its involvement in the Persian Gulf took on new proportions. At this time, the U.S.A. was involved in an increasingly unpopular war in Indochina, so deploying large standing forces in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf was not an option. Therefore, the U.S.A. from the late 1960s created local "protectors" of American and allied interests in the region. A major element in this strategy was to transform Iran, through the supply of U.S. arms, into a regional military power: arms transfers became the main ingredient in the U.S.–Iranian relationship.<sup>2</sup>

All the main justifications for U.S. arms exports were promoted by the various branches in the arms export establishment – the most important being preventing expansion of Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, and converting Iran into a regional power while securing Western access to oil. During the Cold War, the Persian Gulf, Western Europe, and Japan were the regions that Washington perceived as most important to keep under Western control. Strengthening the Iranian armed forces was therefore partly done to encourage the anti-Communist leanings and the pro-American stature of the Shah, and to keep Iran as a buffer against Soviet expansionism. Oil was an essential component in the U.S.–Iranian relationship. Iran is located strategically on the Straits of Hormuz where about 60 percent of all internationally traded oil passed on its way to global markets.<sup>3</sup> In the years preceding Carter's presidency, Iran had become the world's second largest oil exporter,<sup>4</sup> and between eight and nine percent of U.S. oil imports came from Iran.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, by exporting arms to the Shah, the U.S.A. could recoup petrodollars.

In a May 1972 presidential decision, Richard Nixon gave the Shah a 'virtual blank check' to buy all the U.S. conventional weapons and military services he requested.<sup>6</sup> Between 1970 and 1977, Washington accepted Iranian arms requests worth more

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<sup>2</sup> Michael T. Klare argues that arms transfers had never played as big a part in U.S. foreign policy as they did towards Iran from 1972 to 1978. See Michael T. Klare, "Arms and the Shah," *The Progressive*, August 1979, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum (secret), Cyrus Vance to the President, November 8, 1977, The National Security Archive [henceforth NSA], *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977–1980*, Fiche 53, Document 256.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore H. Moran, "Iranian Defense Expenditures and the Social Crisis," *International Security*, No. 3, 1979, p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum (secret), Cyrus Vance to the President, November 8, 1977, NSA, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977–1980*, Fiche 53, Document 256.

<sup>6</sup> Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, Kansas, 1993, p. 127.

than \$13 billion,<sup>7</sup> generating what House Representative Gerry Studds called 'the most rapid buildup of military power under peacetime conditions of any nation in the history of the world.'<sup>8</sup> This represented roughly 25 percent of all U.S. arms export in the period.<sup>9</sup> The Iranian armed forces were almost entirely U.S. trained and equipped.<sup>10</sup>

This large arms transfer program for Iran contributed greatly to the increasing criticism of U.S. arms transfer policy in the late 1960s and through the 1970s. Former U.S. diplomat George Ball compared the U.S. policy to 'giving an alcoholic the keys to the world's largest liquor store,'<sup>11</sup> while *the Washington Post* argued, retrospectively, that in the 1970s, U.S. security interests were 'confused – and sometimes overwhelmed – by the personal financial interests of American weapons merchants who swarmed to Tehran.'<sup>12</sup> The article questioned the integrity of the Military Assistance Advisory Group officers, many recruited by U.S. defense companies, who promoted the sales interests of their respective companies. Members of Congress and the public criticized the Nixon and Ford Administrations' policy toward Iran, and a 1976 congressional study concluded that arms sales to Iran were out of control.<sup>13</sup>

## **U.S. arms transfers to Iran under Carter**

During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had criticized Nixon and Ford for their arms transfer policy toward Iran.<sup>14</sup> One of the first controversial foreign-policy issues the new president faced was how to deal with this legacy. Shortly after having proclaimed his arms transfer restraint policy, Carter had to decide on major arms requests from Iran, which became a testing ground for how he would transform his lofty goals into practical policy. Despite complaints from the Shah, Iran was not

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, pp. 1–2.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Graham Kearns, *Arms for the Poor: President Carter's Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*, Canberra, 1980, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Author's calculations. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, pp. 7–8.

<sup>10</sup> Leslie M. Pryor, "Arms and the Shah," *Foreign Policy*, No. 31, 1978, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Max Holland, "The Myth of Arms Restraint," *Congressional Record – Senate*, July 9, 1979, p. 8941.

<sup>12</sup> "Arming the Shah: U.S. Interests Confused by Push for Profits," *The Washington Post*, January 20, 1980, pp. 1 and 10.

<sup>13</sup> Congressional Research Service, *U.S. Military Sales to Iran*, Washington D.C., 1976, p. XIII.

<sup>14</sup> Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years*, NY, 1986, p. 182.

included among the countries exempted from the controls in PD-13.<sup>15</sup> Exempting it would, of course, have seriously weakened the policy. Including it, on the other hand, would have major consequences for the implementation of control 1, the ceiling. If Carter did not reduce exports to Iran, other countries of presumably less strategic importance would have to bear the brunt of the reductions.

In late January 1977, the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research considered Iran to be stable and assessed that it would continue to be so 'for the next several years.'<sup>16</sup> This assessment was shared by Carter, and at a state dinner in Tehran on 31 December 1977 Carter offered a toast to the Shah and uttered the now famous panegyric that would later haunt him:

*Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and admiration and love which your people give to you.*<sup>17</sup>

The most controversial arms transfer issues involving Iran in 1977 – the sale of F-16s and AWACS – were inherited from the Ford Administration, but internal White House documents show that the new administration had serious intentions of cutting arms sales to the country. Before the Shah's visit to Washington D.C. in November 1977, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance advised Carter to inform the Shah that the 'supply policy of the past is no longer feasible,' but that the message should be delivered in a way that would not shake the Shah's 'confidence in the basic relationship.'<sup>18</sup> Because so much of the U.S.-Iranian relationship was based on arms transfers, this could hardly be done. Carter faced a difficult task if he were to reject Iranian arms requests that had been accepted by previous administrations, while at the same time convincing the Shah that Iran still held the same importance for the U.S.A. On the other hand, the policy Carter had inherited could not continue unabated if he were to achieve his goals on unilateral reductions and agreements for restraint in multilateral arms transfers. The problems Carter encountered in his desire to couple the continuation of a close relationship with Iran with a more modest arms sales program is illustrated by a January 1977 State Department report, which warned that Iran's

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<sup>15</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, May 26, 1977, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President, 1-15 (2/77-6/77)" folder.

<sup>16</sup> Report by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, January 28, 1977, NSA, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, Fiche 188, Document 1144.

<sup>17</sup> *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, Washington D.C., 1983, p. 723.

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum (secret), Cyrus Vance to the President, November 8, 1977, NSA, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, Fiche 53, Document 256.



purchase of the most sophisticated and expensive weapons could jeopardize the country's development program, but that the failure to improve its armed forces' inventory could lead to 'political unrest, increase the threat of subversion,' and undercut 'the value of Iran as an ally.'<sup>19</sup>

Some administration officials wanted to restrain arms transfers to Iran and follow the guidelines stipulated in PD-13, while others saw Iran as too important an ally to follow such a policy. The most vocal opponents of an unchanged arms transfer relationship with Iran were officials in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) and the Department of State. Assistant Director of ACDA, Barry Blechman, argued in January 1978: 'Continued large scale US sales to Iran could reinforce the feeling of other arms producing countries that the US is not serious in its desire to reduce its sales of arms to LDCs.'<sup>20</sup> An important advisory source in decision-making on arms transfers is the diplomatic corps. The U.S. Embassy in Tehran was against Carter's proclaimed objective of reducing the arms flow to their host. The Embassy's position remained the same as it had been during the Ford Presidency.<sup>21</sup> Also impeding arms transfer restraint to Iran (and other countries) were career bureaucrats involved in arms sales decisions. These bureaucrats found an ally in National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>22</sup> Backing up their position was an intelligence report which argued that U.S. reductions would not lead to a cutback in Iranian arms purchases, because 'the Shah would seek to buy arms elsewhere,' and the result would be 'a lessening of US ties to the Iranian military.'<sup>23</sup>

The Shah was anxious about Carter's human rights policy. Despite his toast in Tehran Carter had also publicly criticized the regime for violations of human rights, and Ambassador to Iran William Sullivan expressed to the Shah the White House discomfort with human rights violations.<sup>24</sup> However, although the Iranian regime was cited by international human rights organizations as a gross violator, human rights

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<sup>19</sup> Report by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, January 28, 1977, NSA, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, Fiche 188, Document 1144.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum (secret), Barry Blechman to Leslie H. Gelb, January 18, 1978, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, NSA, Fiche 212, Document 1285.

<sup>21</sup> Olav Njølstad, *Peacekeeper and Troublemaker. The Containment Policy of Jimmy Carter*, Oslo, 1995, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy from Truman to Clinton*, NY, 1994, p. 358.

<sup>23</sup> Report by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, January 28, 1977, NSA, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, Fiche 188, Document 1144.

<sup>24</sup> Michael A. Leeden and William H. Lewis, "Carter and the Fall of the Shah: The Inside Story," *Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1980, p. 1980.

considerations never seem to have had any impact on decision-making when it came to arms requests. One example of this was an August 1978 decision. Despite reports of brutality by the Iranian police and the internal security force SAVAK, and objections from Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Patricia Derian, Carter approved an Iranian request for large amounts of small arms, crowd-control equipment, and anti-riot gear.<sup>25</sup> These were sales made through commercial channels. As explained in chapter 2, PD-13 did not cover commercial sales. To live up to his promise to link human rights and arms transfer decisions, Carter would have had to restrain sales of such weapons and material, since they were the kind most commonly used in human rights violations. It would seem that keeping the Shah in power, amidst increasing internal opposition, was seemingly of greater concern to Carter than sanctioning domestic repression of Iranian dissidents.

### **The AWACS decision**

The Iranian Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) request was the first major arms sale decision made by the new administration, and it caused serious controversy and protests on Capitol Hill. The decision represented the most obvious contradiction of control 2, one of the ground pillars of PD-13, during the life of the restraint policy. Control 2 stated that the U.S. would refrain from being 'the first supplier to introduce into a region an advanced weapons system which creates a new or significantly higher combat capability.'<sup>26</sup> This arms-sale decision would show the difficulties the Carter Administration was to encounter in implementing PD-13 and some of the contradictions between the stated controls and actual decisions. Despite Carter's publicly stated objective of restraining transfers of sophisticated armaments, Iran was considered too important for U.S. security to deny the AWACS request.

As with many of the other controversial arms sales decisions made by the Carter Administration, the proposed transfer of AWACS aircraft to Iran was an issue inherited from the Ford Administration. The Iranians had first requested the weapons system in January 1974, when it was still on the drawing board.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*, Lanham, 1986, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>27</sup> *Prospective Sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Aircraft to Iran: Hearings Before the Subcommittees on International Security and Scientific Affairs and on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives*, June 29; July 19 and 21, 1977, Washington D.C., 1977, p. 101.

The E-3A Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System is a large and highly sophisticated jet aircraft, comprising a Boeing 707 airframe and an advanced radar system. The plane functions as an airborne battlefield command center for surveillance and communication. The plane can cover thousands of square miles, and enables the operators to get an immediate and extensive overview of enemy stationing and movements, as well as positioning of own forces.<sup>28</sup> The production of AWACS began in 1977. It was the most advanced mobile early warning and control system available. Not even the NATO allies possessed the plane.

When Carter sent Congress a preliminary notification of a possible AWACS sale to Iran in May 1977, the General Accounting Office (GAO) was requested by Congress to examine the prospected sale. The report was secret, but parts of it leaked to the press and an unclassified part was printed in the *Congressional Record* in July. The report was critical to the sale, arguing that the administration had not seriously considered other, less sophisticated air defense systems. It was negative to the sale because of the risk of losing highly sensitive AWACS technology to hostile countries (especially the Soviet Union), the possibility that the aircraft could be used for offensive purposes by Iran, and because it would be contrary to Carter's own policy of restraint in arms transfers. The GAO report was used by opponents of the sale, while administration officials criticized it and argued that Iran needed the air defense system to protect itself from hostile neighbors and secure its strategic oil installations in the Gulf.<sup>29</sup> The AWACS' offensive capabilities were heavily debated. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance referred to Executive Branch studies assessing the AWACS as the most cost-effective and best system available for the Iranian purpose.<sup>30</sup> Although the ACDA official responsible for weapons evaluation, Thomas Hirschfeld, admitted that the aircraft had 'inherent capabilities that would complement offensive operations,' he argued that the AWACS was primarily a defensive weapon.<sup>31</sup> Even if AWACS is an unarmed aircraft, a transfer would have increased Iran's offensive capabilities through a force multiplier effect when used to direct attacks with other weapons in the Iranian

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<sup>28</sup> *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1981/82*, London, 1981, p. 314.

<sup>29</sup> See Congressional Research Service, *Executive-Legislative Consultation on U.S. Arms Sales*, Washington D.C., 1982; and letter (executive), Clifford B. Chase and Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, August 5, 1977, JCL, White House Central Files [henceforth WHCF], FO-30 "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>30</sup> Statement by the Secretary of State before the House International Relations Committee, July 28, 1977, *Department of State Bulletin*, August 22, 1977, p. 246.

<sup>31</sup> *Prospective Sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Aircraft to Iran*, p. 12.

inventory, such as F-14s and F-16s. However, PD-13 did not differentiate between offensive and defensive weapons: thus, weapons systems such as AWACS, no matter what their categorization, were included in the controls of PD-13.

In June, Carter approved the sale of seven AWACS, worth \$1.23 billion, to Iran. On July 7, the request was formally sent to Congress for approval. Hearings both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives were held late in the same month. Opposition to the sale was not a partisan issue, as there was resistance from both Democrats and Republicans. Nevertheless, a majority came from Carter's own party, with liberal-wing Democrats in the forefront. Among the opposition were such prominent Democrats as Senate majority leader Robert Byrd, and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Frank Church. They had been active in increasing Congress' control over arms transfers in the mid-1970s, and had supported Carter's objective of restraining arms transfers. There was also resistance to the sale within the Executive Branch, notably from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) under its Director, Admiral Stansfield Turner. He believed that if Iran were to possess the aircraft, this would greatly increase the possibility that the Soviet Union could gain access to its technology through theft, corruption, or espionage. The Soviets could then move five to seven years forward in certain technologies, and seriously enhance their intelligence.<sup>32</sup>

According to Section 36(b) of the 1976 Arms Export Control Act, any proposed transfer exceeding \$7 million could be blocked by a concurrent resolution by both Houses of Congress within 30 days of notification of the sale. This right to veto an executive arms sale proposal had never been used (and still has not), but the AWACS transaction came close to being the first.

Opponents of the sale argued that it posed several problems. Their arguments were mainly the same as those put forth in the GAO report. In addition, the opponents doubted Iran's ability to absorb more sophisticated military equipment. Iran lacked the technical foundation to absorb the sophisticated arms it imported. Erich von Marbod, Deputy Assistant Director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency, stated that the AWACS transfer would result in between 360 and 400 U.S. personnel being stationed in Iran over a six-year period.<sup>33</sup> In 1977, close to 10,000 U.S. military

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<sup>32</sup> *Executive-Legislative Consultation on U.S. Arms Sales*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>33</sup> *Prospective Sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Aircraft to Iran*, p. 22.

technicians were already working on weapons projects in Iran.<sup>34</sup> The opposition argued that Iran had reached the point where it could not absorb any more U.S.-made weaponry, and that an increase of U.S. personnel in Iran could lead to 'a potential hostage situation in the event of conflict or internal disturbances,'<sup>35</sup> or, in the worst case, draw the U.S.A. into an armed conflict.<sup>36</sup>

In terms of the subject of this thesis, the most important argument against the sale is that it contravened control 2 of PD-13, which stipulated that the U.S.A. would not be the first to introduce new military technology into an area. The AWACS was a far more advanced air defense system than that possessed by any countries in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, and there was concern that the sale would have an adverse impact on the military balance in the volatile region. Connected to this problem was the disagreement over the offensive capabilities of the weapons system.<sup>37</sup> Some members of Congress reminded the administration of this, and argued that the sale would 'undercut the credibility' of its own arms export guidelines.<sup>38</sup>

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' powerful Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance finished its review of the sales proposal on July 26, 1977, and requested Carter to temporarily withdraw the proposal for further consideration.<sup>39</sup> It warned about the possibility of a vote for a resolution of disapproval, and a Congressional

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<sup>34</sup> Marc Leepson, "America's Arms Sales," *Editorial Research Reports*, Vol. 1, No. 17, 1977, p. 333.

<sup>35</sup> Letter (executive), John C. Culver to the President, May 27, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-25, "FO 3-2 5/1/77-6/30/77" folder

<sup>36</sup> See letter (executive), Clifford B. Case and Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, May 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; letter (executive), Thomas F. Eagleton et al. to the President, May 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; and letter (executive), Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, July 27, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>37</sup> See letter (executive), Clifford B. Case and Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, May 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; letter (executive), John C. Culver to the President, May 27, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-25, "FO 3-2 5/1/77-6/30/77" folder; letter (executive), Thomas F. Eagleton et al. to the President, May 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; letter (executive), Robert C. Byrd to the President, July 22, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; and letter (executive), Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, July 27, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>38</sup> See letter (executive), Robert C. Byrd to the President, July 22, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; and letter (executive), Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, July 27, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>39</sup> One of the fiercest critics on the sale in Congress, Senator Robert Byrd, had earlier urged for the sale to be temporarily withdrawn because of heavy 'schedule facing the Senate', but the President three days later answered the question negatively. Letter (executive), Robert C. Byrd to the President July 22, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

veto. If, however, Carter would still decide to go ahead with the transfer, the Subcommittee asked that certain assurances be given:

- Removal from the AWACS of equipment considered especially sensitive;
- U.S. monitoring of the Iranian use of the AWACS, so that it would be used for defensive purposes only;
- Iranian promises that the AWACS would not be used for offensive purposes;
- All future sales of U.S. aircraft to Iran should take into account the multiplier effect that AWACS would have on the offensive capabilities of these planes;
- Iranian pilots would be trained in the U.S.A., and no U.S. personnel would take part in AWACS missions in Iran;
- The Administration should conduct a detailed study of Iran's ability to absorb sophisticated U.S. military equipment.<sup>40</sup>

The Subcommittee forwarded 'without recommendation or prejudice' a proposed resolution of disapproval to the full Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.<sup>41</sup> In reply, Carter promised to provide the six assurances, and reaffirmed his judgment that 'the impact of the sale of AWACS' [sic] would 'stabilize the Middle East regional military balance.'<sup>42</sup> At the same time as the Senate Subcommittee held its meetings on the AWACS sale, the House International Relations Committee voted, 19 to 17, for a concurrent resolution of disapproval. Faced with this possibility of disapproval, which would be the result if a majority of both Houses adopted the resolution, Carter temporarily withdrew the sale notification from the Senate on July 28, 1977.<sup>43</sup>

On September 7, 1977, the proposed sale was reintroduced to Congress in amended form. During new hearings, White House officials confirmed that the six safeguard provisions demanded by the Senate Foreign Assistance Subcommittee had been agreed to by both the Carter Administration itself and the Government of Iran. The Senate then reluctantly approved the sale, after Carter had personally assured Congress on the safeguards. The AWACS versions eventually contracted for sale to Iran were modified versions of the ones the U.S. Air Force used, and would not come with equipment such as the most sophisticated enciphering and intelligence systems.

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<sup>40</sup> Letter (executive), Hubert H. Humphrey to the President, July 27, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Hubert Humphrey, July 28, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>43</sup> *Executive-Legislative Consultation on U.S. Arms Sales*, p. 13.

As always when the executive has negotiated an arms deal, the recipient saw this as a *de facto* promise of delivery. Because of the important security relationship between Iran and the U.S.A., it was difficult for Congress to stop the transfer. This was a significant argument used by Carter. In a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas P. O'Neill, Carter warned: 'Congressional rejection of this sale would carry with it serious consequences for American foreign policy.'<sup>44</sup> Instead of outright rejection of the sale, the opposition settled for what it perceived to be the second-best option: to modify it. No White House documents show that the administration had discussed such modifications prior to the Senate request. Had it not been for Congressional protests, the AWACS sold to Iran would probably not have been the modified versions, but the more advanced versions used by the U.S. Air Force.

Since the decision to sell AWACS was not made by second-echelon bureaucrats, but by senior foreign-policy and defense officials and the President himself, the explanation for the sales decision cannot be found in bureaucratic procedures, but must be sought in the administration's political, military and economic priorities. When the AWACS decision was delayed in July, the Shah communicated his displeasure to Carter. Irritated with the Shah's impatience, Carter wrote in his diary: 'I don't care whether he buys them from us or not,' and that it would have been 'all right if he decided to buy similar equipment elsewhere.'<sup>45</sup> This hardly seems convincing when we know about the numerous strategic and geopolitical reasons for preserving the all-important U.S. influence in Iran. The force with which both Carter and his senior foreign-policy advisers fought to press the sale through Congress shows that Carter did care and that he attached considerable importance to the sale. The main arguments used by Carter in approving the sale, as set forth by State Department officials in the Congressional hearings, was that it would be in the U.S. security interest and that it met the legitimate defense needs of Iran. Confronted with breaking control 2 of PD-13, Carter invoked the exception clause in the guidelines, which provides that all controls may be broken if that is needed to 'offset quantitative

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<sup>44</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Thomas P. O'Neill, July 28, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>45</sup> Emphasis in original. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, New York, 1982, p. 443.

and other disadvantages in order to maintain a regional balance,<sup>46</sup> having in mind especially the large military arsenals of the Soviet Union and Iraq.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned, it was U.S. policy to keep Iran as a regional stabilizer, and this policy necessitated large-scale deliveries of U.S. armaments. However, maintaining the regional balance was in fact probably not the main rationale behind the decision. There are no indications that the Soviet Union militarily threatened Iran; and the military forces of neighboring Iraq were not as well equipped as Iran's, even without Iranian possession of AWACS. The main rationale behind the sale was probably the desire to preserve the close U.S.-Iranian relationship. Carter was afraid that refusing the Shah's request could harm this relationship. At the House hearing in July 1977, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Alfred Atherton went far in acknowledging that the transfer was motivated as much by political factors as by Iranian military requirements.<sup>48</sup>

Another weighty reason for the sale, not openly admitted to the public, was that export of seven AWACS would mean financial advantages for the Pentagon. Even though Carter in his public statements on the new arms transfer policy had stressed that arms sales in the future would be used only 'to promote our security and the security of our close friends,'<sup>49</sup> and although it probably was not the most important objective, economic considerations were a logical rationale for the sale. The U.S. Air Force had encountered cost overruns and Congress had not approved production of the number of AWACS they desired. A \$1.23 billion sale of AWACS to Iran would reduce the R&D expenditures for each plane through cost-sharing. Therefore, the Air Force put heavy pressure to bear on Carter to approve the sale to reduce the per-unit costs of this expensive military system.<sup>50</sup> Jerome Stolarow of the General Accounting Office speculated at the House hearings that Air Force officers had a 'big hand' in Carter's decision.<sup>51</sup> While Air Force officers did not have the final say, their advocacy is very likely to have had some impact on the final decision.

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<sup>46</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>47</sup> Statement by the Secretary of State before the House International Relations Committee, July 28, 1977. *Department of State Bulletin*, August 22, 1977, p. 246.

<sup>48</sup> Atherton said: 'I think it [political] is a very large factor. [...] There is a very strong political incentive to help Iran acquire a system which we both agree it needs.' *Prospective Sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Aircraft to Iran*, p. 76.

<sup>49</sup> Statement by the President, May 19, 1977. *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

<sup>50</sup> *Congressional Record – Senate*, July 9, 1979, NSA, Box: Arms Control/Sales.

<sup>51</sup> *Prospective Sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Aircraft to Iran*, p. 35.



The final approval of the sale was considered a victory for Carter – but it was a victory that came with a considerable political price. Many observers began to doubt the sincerity of Carter’s arms transfer restraint policy. He pressed through the sale shortly after the policy had been presented, thereby showing that he was willing to sacrifice it if other “more important” policy objectives were threatened. The decision also sent signals to the arms transfer bureaucracy that PD-13 was open to exceptions, and did not have to be followed rigorously. Of greatest consequence for the future of the policy was that the sale damaged the prospects of involving other arms exporters in restraint measures. When the decision was announced in June 1977, talks with the major European arms producers had produced few results, but Washington and Moscow had agreed to start discussions on a bilateral agreement (see chapter 3). By selling one of the world’s most sophisticated conventional weapons systems to a state bordering on the Soviet Union, Carter seriously jeopardized these talks.

### **Arms requests refusals**

Carter did turn down two of the Shah’s arms requests – for the F-4G Wild Weasel fighter-bomber, and the F-18L fighter aircraft. While there is no reason to doubt that these refusals were driven by a genuine desire to implement PD-13, there were probably also other motives behind the decisions.

The request for 250 F-18Ls was handled in June 1977, about one month after the official announcement of the arms transfer restraint policy. The official justification for refusing the request was that the plane was not yet operationally deployed with U.S. forces, as opposed to the AWACS.<sup>52</sup> If accepted, it would have broken with control 2 of PD-13, which said that: ‘Commitment for sale or co-production of newly-developed advanced weapons systems is prohibited until the systems are operationally deployed with US forces.’<sup>53</sup> Confronted with the inconsistency in refusing this request while accepting that for AWACS, Carter explained that when the Shah requested the F-18L, the aircraft did not ‘exist except on the drawing boards of the manufacturer,’ and

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<sup>52</sup> Letter (executive), Jack H. Watson to Tom Bradley, July 19, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, “FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder.

<sup>53</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, “Presidential Directives 1-20” folder.

Pentagon had no immediate plans to purchase the aircraft.<sup>54</sup> The refusal was taken at the same time as the AWACS request was accepted. A positive reply to the F-18L request might have caused criticism by itself, but coupled with the AWACS sale, it would probably have provoked strong Congressional opposition. Another exemption to PD-13 would have discredited the policy seriously. No one in the administration advocated an F-18 sale, so the prospect of Congressional criticism was probably not the main reason for the refusal. More significant is the importance the Shah placed on purchasing AWACS. Iran already possessed sophisticated fighter aircraft (F-14s and F-16s), and he pressed harder for purchasing AWACS than F-18Ls. Carter wanted to restrain U.S. arms sales to Iran, but he judged refusing the AWACS request as too damaging to U.S.–Iranian relations. On the other hand, he felt he could refuse the F-18L request without seriously risking deteriorating the U.S.–Iranian relationship.

In August 1978, Iran requested to purchase 31 F-4 aircraft. The Shah sought the F-4G with sophisticated electronic warfare equipment (Group A Wiring), which would give the planes “Wild Weasel” capability, a design for tracking and neutralizing enemy radar equipment. This aircraft was not available for export before February 1978, and Iran was one of the first countries to request it. The request was quickly turned down on the grounds that it would have introduced into the region a new, sophisticated weapons system.<sup>55</sup> As with the F-18L refusal, White House documents do not indicate that Carter or any of his senior foreign-policy officials favored accepting the request. It is probable that, also in this instance, Carter chose to abide by PD-13 without fear of harming U.S.–Iranian relations. However, there is another factor that could have contributed to the decision. The request came up for consideration shortly after the congressional debate about the controversial sale of fighter aircraft to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia (see chapter 8). As with the decisions on AWACS and the Middle East aircraft package, the fiercest criticism came from within Carter’s own party. Among the opponents to the F-18L sale were Democrats like Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East Lee Hamilton, and Senators John Culver and Dick Clark.<sup>56</sup> Acceptance of the request would have further alienated Carter from mainstream opinion in the Democratic Party, an unwelcome prospect in a period when

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<sup>54</sup> Letter (executive), the President to Alan Cranston, undated, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, “FO 3-2/CO71” folder.

<sup>55</sup> Letter (executive), Zbigniew Brzezinski to Dick Clark, August 19, 1978, JCL, WHCF, Box-30, “FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder.

<sup>56</sup> See Letter (executive), Lee H. Hamilton to the President, August 2, 1978, JCL, WHCF, “FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder; and Letter (executive), John Culver and Dick Clark to the President, August 9, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, “FO 3-2/CO71 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder.

he was struggling to get the Panama Canal Treaties ratified by Congress, and needed all the support he could muster.

In contrast to the AWACS, the Iranian requests for Wild Weasels and F-18Ls were not inherited from Carter's predecessors, and could thus be turned down more easily. These two arms transfer refusals show that Iran was not totally exempt from the controls of PD-13, and that, under certain conditions, Carter also implemented the arms transfer restraint policy towards a country perceived to be important for U.S. security interests. There were two major conditions for refusing Iranian arms requests: (1) previous administrations had not committed the U.S.A. to these sales; and (2) refusal would not seriously jeopardize the U.S.–Iranian relationship.

## **U.S. arms transfers and the fall of the Shah**

U.S. arms sales to Iran created some of the problems that were to bring down the Shah.<sup>57</sup> To keep the loyalty of the military officers, the Shah believed that the armed forces needed a steady flow of modern weaponry. However, Iran was also a developing country, and heavy military spending created an excessive economic burden on the economy. The level of arms imports came at the expense of solving basic social problems, such as improvement of infrastructure, housing, and health services. The Iranian population's dissatisfaction with their social conditions and lack of economic development were important factors contributing to support for the opposition. In 1976, the Iranian government spent approximately \$10 billion on the military (32 percent of all government expenditures), but only about \$5 billion on public health and education.<sup>58</sup> The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research recognized already in January 1977 that 'purchases of next generation arms [...] would jeopardize Iran's development program,'<sup>59</sup> but this consideration was never incorporated into Carter's arms transfer policy to the country.

The wisdom of the almost unrestrained supply of weapons to Iran was heavily debated within the Carter Administration, and the management of the Iranian arms transfer program had not yet been settled internally when the Pahlavi dynasty

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<sup>57</sup> For this argument, see for example, Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, pp. 150–152; and Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, pp. 124–126.

<sup>58</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1969–1978*, p. 52.

<sup>59</sup> Report by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, January 28, 1977, NSA, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977–1980*, Fiche 188, Document 1144.

collapsed on January 16, 1979, thus neatly “solving” Carter’s problem by removing the whole issue.

In addition to the lack of economic and social development in Iran, the massive imports of U.S. arms fostered corruption and unemployment, because construction at home was impeded. The psychological aspect was also important, as many Iranians saw the Shah as an American puppet who followed U.S. foreign-policy interests rather than Iranian ones. In a February 1979 House hearing on arms transfers to North Yemen, after the fall of the Shah, Democratic Representative Gerry Studds complained: ‘we wound up with a whole congressional district in Iran.’ He went on to argue that ‘what happened in Iran, [...] is preeminently a function of the abject and complete failure of U.S. foreign policy. We, unfortunately, miserably, can take large measure of credit for the situation in which Iran now finds itself.’<sup>60</sup> The uprising in 1978/79 was partly mobilized to expel Western influence from the country – and the presence of some 30,000 U.S. citizens in Iran and the U.S. arms transfer program to the country were the most visible and unpopular of these.

Carter Administration officials acknowledged the negative impact of the large U.S. arms transfer program to Iran after the fall of the Shah. In a May 1979 speech, approved by the Department of State and the National Security Council staff, Assistant Director of ACDA, Barry Blechman said:

*I think Iran in particular has starkly demonstrated the impact that massive arms programs can have on a developing country, even one with enormous financial resources. We have learned that recipient security and regional stability are ill served by arms imports that strain the recipient’s absorptive capacity and divert resources from other vital programs. That is a recipe for disaster.*<sup>61</sup>

Even after the fall of the Shah, Washington did not completely stop arms transfers to Iran. Equipment considered sensitive was halted in late 1978 due to the increasing uncertainties in Iran, but August 1979 saw the resumption of the export of spare parts for U.S. -made weapons to Iran’s new authorities. Arms deliveries did not end until the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in November 1979.

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<sup>60</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, March 12, 1979, Washington D.C., 1979, p. 52.*

<sup>61</sup> Memorandum (executive), Norman G. Clyne to Christine Dodson, May 16, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FG-209, “FG 264 1/1/79–5/31/79” folder.

When the Shah's regime collapsed in January 1979, the Carter Administration was left with huge quantities of weapons on order. In February, the new Iranian government canceled \$6.5 billion of the \$11.4 billion in outstanding orders – including the 7 AWACS (\$1.3 billion), 160 F-16s (\$2.2 billion), 16 RF-4Es reconnaissance aircraft (\$227 million), and 428 Phoenix air-to-air missiles (\$166 million). There were also concerns about the sincerity and ability of the new regime to pay for the remaining \$4.8 billion of weapons contracted for and under construction.<sup>62</sup> Most of these orders were also eventually cancelled, and Washington suddenly had massive amounts of sophisticated weaponry without any buyers. This "problem" was solved by a major arms sales campaign in the Middle East carried out by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown (see chapter 8). Because Iran accounted for one-quarter of U.S. arms transfers, and Carter, except for the two above-mentioned refusals, did not restrain exports to Iran, Iran was an impediment to the implementation of PD-13. With the fall of the Shah, the U.S.A. lost its largest arms importer, and this made it easier to abide by the policy of restraint in arms transfers. However, Carter did not use this "opportunity" to implement PD-13 more forcefully. Instead he found new arms customers, and increased sales to old ones. If the Shah's regime had fallen earlier, perhaps that could have had positive effects on the restraint policy. However, by 1979, the global superpower competition had intensified, and Carter and his foreign-policy advisers were afraid that Moscow would use the upheavals in Iran to their advantage and increase Soviet influence in the Gulf. It therefore became imperative for the U.S.A. to improve its relations with other countries in the region, and this was partly done through increased arms transfers.

## Conclusion

As shown in the case studies on Latin America and Pakistan, Carter's restraint policy could be implemented, given the right conditions. However, these conditions were not present in the case of Iran. Throughout Carter's presidency, a country's perceived strategic importance for U.S. security was the argument that most often impeded restraint in arms transfers. Iran is a prominent example of this. In the post-Vietnam War period, the U.S.A. relied on regional allies, rather than deployment of U.S. forces abroad to insure its interests. Since Washington saw Iran as the most important keeper of U.S. interests in the Gulf region, it was difficult for Carter to refuse Iranian weapons requests. The major leverage the U.S.A. had on Iran was its power to accept

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<sup>62</sup> Memorandum (confidential), James T. McIntyre Jr. to the President, February 26, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-24, "FO 3-2 11/1/78-4/30/79" folder.

or reject Tehran's arms requests. If Carter had implemented PD-13 as forcefully toward Iran as he did toward Latin America, Iran would probably have purchased military equipment from other suppliers, and the U.S.A. could have lost influence in the country. By 1977, the doctrine of supplying the Shah with the amounts of sophisticated weapons that he requested in order for him to safeguard U.S. interests and serve as a peacekeeper in the region had become such an important component of U.S. foreign policy that only a minor "revolution" by the new administration could have changed this strategy. Given the Persian Gulf's strategic importance to the West, this was not a chance Carter and his foreign-policy advisers were willing to take.

In his memoirs, Cyrus Vance writes that the 'basic approach' in U.S.-Iranian relations resembled the that of preceding U.S. administrations, but he then adds: 'There would be marked differences in the way we conducted our bilateral relations, particularly as regards arms sales and human rights.'<sup>63</sup> True, Carter ended the *blank check* policy of Nixon and Ford, and Iranian arms requests were reviewed more critically than during the two previous presidencies. From the decisions on the F-18L and F4-G requests we can see that, when national security interests were not believed to be influenced by refusals, Carter implemented PD-13, also with regard to Iran. However, the differences in the arms sales program to Iran were not as marked as Vance claims. The record on arms sales shows that Carter essentially followed the Nixon/Ford policy, and most of Iran's arms requests were granted. Carter was, especially in the first months of his tenure, more critical towards the Shah regime's human rights abuses than his predecessors had been. However, he never denied any of the Shah's arms requests specifically because of violations of human rights. Carter made sure that his arms transfer and human rights policies never threatened the all-important relationship with the Shah and U.S. interests in Iran.

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<sup>63</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York, 1983, p. 314.

## Chapter 7

# South Korea and the Philippines

South Korea and the Philippines are dealt with jointly because of the many similarities in the way the Carter Administration implemented its human rights and arms transfer policy toward these two countries. In addition, its arms transfers to the Philippines and South Korea caused more controversy and interference from Congress than did arms transfers to most other countries.

The governments of both South Korea and the Philippines were known for their poor human rights record. This chapter will examine to which degree this affected U.S. arms transfers. In addition, it will explore if Carter's policy towards these two countries differed from the policies of his predecessors, and will discuss if PD-13 had any bearing on arms transfers.

## The Republic of Korea (South Korea)

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, the main U.S. security objectives in the Republic of Korea (ROK) were to stabilize the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula and prevent a new military conflict. The U.S.–South Korean security relationship was based on a Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1954, on the stationing of U.S. military forces in Korea, and on U.S. economic and military assistance.<sup>1</sup> Since the end of World War II, the U.S.A. had been almost the sole provider of military equipment to the ROK. Following the 1969 Nixon Doctrine, which called for improvements in the national defense capabilities of America's East Asian allies, U.S. arms transfers to the ROK increased. In the period 1973 to 1977, the U.S.A. supplied South Korea with about \$1 billion worth of arms.<sup>2</sup> Moscow similarly supplied North Korea with huge quantities of arms, but the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. to a certain degree regulated their transfers so as to discourage arms races and aggressive acts which could result in a superpower confrontation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter (executive), the President to Thomas P. O'Neill, undated, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 5, "Armacost Chron File, 10/1–14/77" folder.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1968–1978*, Washington D.C., 1979, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 212.

As human rights issues became more important in U.S. politics from the early 1970s, the authoritarian South Korean regime came under attack from human rights activists in Congress and non-governmental organizations. Several members of Congress wanted the U.S.A. to disassociate itself more from the regime in Seoul and reduce its huge annual security assistance to the country. Also contributing to the criticism of the Korean Government were reports that the Korean Intelligence Agency had been bribing U.S. Congressmen – the so-called “Koreagate”. In 1974 Congressional legislation and appropriations placed restrictions on U.S. military aid and credits to South Korea, in response to its poor human rights record.

### **Arms for troop withdrawal**

The “arms for troop withdrawal” in South Korea is important for the subject matter of this thesis because it shows how Carter used arms transfers to compensate for a planned reduction of overseas stationing of U.S. forces. In this instance, the arms transfer restraint policy conflicted with one of Carter’s other foreign-policy objectives intended to enhance the prospects for peace.

Living up to an election promise, Carter on May 5, 1977 presented to his administration, in Presidential Directive 12 (PD-12), a plan for the phased withdrawal of all U.S. ground combat forces from South Korea over a five-year period.<sup>4</sup> On May 26, 1977, the plan was announced publicly. The decision continued the policy initiated by the Nixon Administration, which had pulled out the seventh Infantry Division in 1971. Carter’s planned withdrawal produced opposition in Congress and came as a shock to the government in Seoul. The opposition in Washington and the South Korean authorities argued that the People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) was a constant threat and that a U.S. troop withdrawal would have serious consequences for the ROK’s security and the power balance in Northeast Asia.

Carter also encountered resistance within his administration. The opposition to his view was led by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke, and included all senior foreign policy officials.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a majority of top U.S. military officers opposed the plan.<sup>6</sup> Among the critics in the armed forces

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<sup>4</sup> Presidential Directive 12 (sensitive), May 5, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, “Presidential Directives 1-20” folder.

<sup>5</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, New York, 2001, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> Kwang-Il Baek, *Korea and the United States*, Seoul, 1988, p. 144; and Taik-Young Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas*, New York, 1999, p. 82.



were such senior officers as the Commander in Chief for the Pacific, Admiral Maurice Weisner; Chief of Staff of U.S. forces in Korea, Major General John Singlaub;<sup>7</sup> and Commander of the United Nations in South Korea, General John Vessey.<sup>8</sup> The Joint Chiefs of Staff deemed the plan untimely and suggested withdrawal of only 7,000 soldiers.<sup>9</sup>

Carter conceded that the U.S.A. could not withdraw all its ground forces without compensating for the altered military balance this would lead to on the peninsula. The Joint Chiefs of Staff then acquiesced to the withdrawal plan, on the condition that it was preceded by certain security-supporting measures for the Korean defense forces.<sup>10</sup> Increased military assistance was the most important of these, and PD-12 said that the U.S.A. would provide the ROK with military material 'adequate to overcome deficiencies arising from the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces.'<sup>11</sup>

In July 1977, the U.S. administration and the government of President Park Chung Hee reached an agreement on a compensatory arms package. According to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, the package was 'militarily essential, of significant economic help to the ROK, big enough to assuage but not satisfy Korean concerns, and modest enough to make it past Congressional critics.'<sup>12</sup> The compensation was a \$1.8-billion grant package of military equipment, to be delivered over a five-year period, that included such sophisticated arms as A-10 ground support aircraft, tanks, and surface-to-air and anti-tank missiles.<sup>13</sup> The compensation also included \$800 million worth of military equipment then in the custody of the U.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Division in South Korea. As this division departed, the

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<sup>7</sup> Singlaub was removed from his post in Korea because of his heavy public criticism of the withdrawal plan. See Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of conversation (secret), April 11, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder; and Baek, *Korea and the United States*, pp. 143-145.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>10</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> Presidential Directive 12 (sensitive), May 5, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum (secret), Cyrus Vance and Harold Brown to the President, July 13, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 4, "Armacost Chron File, 7/1-14/77" folder.

<sup>13</sup> Paul L. Ferrari, Jeffrey W. Knopf, and Raúl L. Madrid, *US Arms Exports: Policies and Contractors*, Washington D.C., 1987, p. 26; and Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, pp. 56 and 211.

equipment would be left cost-free for the Korean forces.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the U.S.A. obliged itself to assist in South Korea's efforts to enlarge and improve the country's defense industry. The next step for Carter was to get the military assistance package authorized by Congress.

In this, Carter met heavy resistance.<sup>15</sup> Liberals opposed to aid to the brutal regime in Seoul, and conservatives opposed to the troop withdrawal, cooperated in delaying Congressional decision-making on the transfer proposal.<sup>16</sup> Both groups were troubled by the Korean Government's refusals to reveal all information about "Koreagate."<sup>17</sup> Thus, they impeded Carter's efforts and significantly contributed to his later decision (in July 1979) to drop the withdrawal. The package was passed by the Senate in mid-1978, but a changed international situation, with new upward assessments of North Korea's attack capabilities, resistance from within the administration, the negative sentiment of Congress, and pressure from the Government of the ROK and other Asian nations, contributed to Carter's decision to abandon his campaign promise on ground-troop withdrawal. Although the withdrawal never came to fruition, Carter's decision on the arms package shows that he was willing to use large arms transfers as a tool in achieving other policy objectives – in this case, reducing the number of U.S. soldiers stationed overseas.

## **Fighter aircraft requests**

In mid-1977, South Korea requested to purchase sixty U.S. General Dynamics F-16A aircraft.<sup>18</sup> After intense discussions within the administration, Carter refused the request in March 1978. Discussions on the request followed the usual lines of disagreement on major controversial arms transfers. The Arms Control and

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<sup>14</sup> Letter (executive), the President to Thomas P. O'Neill, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 5, "Armacost Chron File, 10/1-14/77" folder.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, April 18, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder; and memorandum of conversation (secret), April 11, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum (secret), Christine Dodson to the Secretary of State et al., April 14, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum (secret), Madeleine Albright to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, March 25, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, "NSC Weekly Legislative Reports, 1-4/78" folder; and memorandum of conversation (secret), March 9, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 2, "Armacost Chron File, 3/10-15/77" folder.

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum (secret), Leslie Gelb and Richard Holbrooke to the Secretary, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 6, "Armacost Chron File, 2/23-28/78" folder.

Disarmament Agency (ACDA) officials were opposed, the Department of State was split (with the regional bureau and the Office of Politico-Military Affairs for and the Human Rights Bureau against), while Pentagon supported a sale.<sup>19</sup> The National Security Council staff advocated approval but wanted to wait until Congress had decided on the withdrawal compensation package.<sup>20</sup> Thus, their sole concern was to avoid a battle with Capitol Hill. The opposition believed that a transfer of this high-performance fighter would result in the Soviets supplying North Korea with more and better weapons, thereby provoking an arms race.<sup>21</sup> North Korea's most sophisticated fighter aircraft at the time was the MiG-21, and the opposition feared that a U.S. sale of F-16s would make Pyongyang pressure Moscow, which 'in all likelihood' would provide its most advanced aircraft, the MiG-23 and/or SU-17.<sup>22</sup> Director of the State Department Office of Politico-Military Affairs Leslie Gelb and Richard Holbrooke assessed that the transfer of F-16s to South Korea would 'undermine the credibility of the Administration's arms transfer policy.'<sup>23</sup> Because the North Koreans did not have aircraft comparable to the F-16, such a sale would break with control 2 of PD-13 and 'introduce into a region a weapons system which creates a new or significantly higher combat capability.'<sup>24</sup> Since the aircraft was not yet in use by the U.S. Air Force, it would also break with the clause in control 2 stating that there would be no transfers of weapons not 'operationally deployed with US forces.'<sup>25</sup> Not only would approval of this request have broken with the unilateral controls of PD-13, it would probably also have created problems for the planned bilateral talks with the Soviet Union on restraint in the transfer of conventional arms. When the Carter Administration considered the Korean request, the two superpowers had just finished the first round of the Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) talks, and a second round was planned. Six months earlier, the U.S.A. had contracted with Iran for the sale of AWACS, and it is

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum (secret), Michael Armacost to David C. Gombert, February 24, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 6, "Armacost Chron File, 2/23-28/78" folder.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum (secret), Leslie Gelb and Richard Holbrooke to the Secretary, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 6, "Armacost Chron File, 2/23-28/78" folder.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jessica Tuchman Matthew and Leslie Denend to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 65, "Platt Chron File, 10/78" folder.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum (secret), Leslie Gelb and Richard Holbrooke to the Secretary, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 6, "Armacost Chron File, 2/23-28/78" folder.

<sup>24</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

likely that a sale of F-16s to South Korea would have further soured the CAT talks before they really started.<sup>26</sup>

The scholar Joanna Spear has argued that the decision not to sell South Korea F-16s showed that PD-13 was used 'to justify transfer refusals which were actually being made for other reasons,' and that the rejection was 'made for political reasons and cloaked in the rhetoric of PD-13.'<sup>27</sup> Certainly, other considerations than just arms-transfer restraint guided the decision. Most important were probably the tacit U.S.–Soviet agreement to restrict arms transfers to the Korean Peninsula to reduce superpower tension, and the desire not to provoke Beijing unnecessarily. However, as noted on Carter's refusal of Pakistan's request for A-7s, there are always multiple reasons for U.S. acceptances and rejections of requests for large arms transfers. We cannot disregard the importance of Carter's restraint policy merely because a refusal was in accordance with other foreign policy objectives as well. Carter's arms transfer restraint policy had to a large degree been justified by the administration precisely as a means to impede arms races in the Third World. According to Jessica Tuchman and Les Denend of the National Security Council staff, this decision was:

*the perfect test case for arms restraint: two hostile countries, both spending large sums on arms, and both on the brink of making a major step up in technological sophistication [...] and cost. The question is does it make sense for both countries to make the step up, or for both to preserve the status quo.*<sup>28</sup>

By keeping the South Koreans from acquiring F-16s, control 2 proved effective in this instance.<sup>29</sup> As mentioned, internal discussions in the administration also show that arms transfer restraint was considered in the decision-making. The conditions for implementing PD-13 were present: Because South Korea depended almost solely on the U.S.A. for its security and arms imports, it was unlikely that Seoul would turn to another arms supplier, so Washington would not risk losing any of its strategic importance in the country because of the refusal. The timing of the decision was probably also relevant. In March 1978, U.S.–Soviet relations had not started to

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<sup>26</sup> This was noted by Leslie Gelb and Richard Holbrooke. See memorandum (secret), Leslie Gelb and Richard Holbrooke to the Secretary, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 6, "Armacost Chron File, 2/23–28/78" folder.

<sup>27</sup> Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*, Ipswich, 1995, p. 174.

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jessica Tuchman Matthew and Leslie Denend to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 65, "Platt Chron File, 10/78" folder.

<sup>29</sup> The Reagan Administration in its second month in office reversed Carter's decision, and decided to supply South Korea with 36 F-16s at a cost of \$900 million. See Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 212.

deteriorate seriously, and Carter still believed in the policy of détente. Moscow might have seen supplying South Korea with F-16s at this stage as a provocation and as breaking the policy of détente, and these were prospects not welcomed by Carter in early 1978.

In the case of South Korea, Carter followed PD-13 in rejecting the request of F-16s. However, the need to compensate for a planned troop withdrawal led him to increase the transfer of other arms, thus breaking with the objectives of his arms transfer restraint policy.

## The Philippines

The U.S.A. and the Philippines had maintained a close security relationship since this U.S. colony became independent in 1946. Washington had provided Manila with considerable military assistance in addition to keeping a naval and air base in the country. As with South Korea, the U.S.A. was almost the exclusive arms provider for the Philippines. The military bases, grounded in a 1947 Military Bases Agreement, were of major importance in the U.S. forward defense policy. Former defense security adviser in the Pentagon, Philip Barringer, who served as U.S. negotiator for military bases in several countries during the Carter Presidency, retrospectively said that the bases were unique in 'their ability to project U.S. forces with forward supply elements for operations in the Indian Ocean or in the area of the Philippines itself.'<sup>30</sup> Many of the original 23 U.S. military bases in the Philippines had been abandoned when Carter took office, but two large bases remained: Clark Air Base and the Naval Port Facility of Subic Bay.

The 1947 U.S.–Philippine Military Assistance Agreement and the Military Bases Agreement were seen as two sides of the same coin. The agreement on bases stated that U.S. use was to be 'free of rent,' but it also stipulated that the U.S.A. would assist the Philippines in developing effective defense forces,<sup>31</sup> and Manila judged the U.S. 'grant military assistance as an implicit quid pro quo for our use of the bases.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Philip E. Barringer, "The Strategic Importance of the Philippines," in John W. McDonald and Diane B. Bendahmane, eds., *U.S. Bases Overseas: Negotiations with Spain, Greece, and the Philippines*, Oxford, 1990, p. 117.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Ellen L. Frost to the Deputy Secretary of State, July 25, 1978, the National Security Archive [henceforth NSA], *The Philippines: The Marcos Years, 1965–1986*, Fiche 273, Document 1322.

<sup>32</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Mike Armacost to Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 12, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, box 5, "Armacost Chron File, 12/77" folder.

As the Philippines had become reliant on U.S. military material, and the U.S.A. depended on good relations with the Philippines to keep the bases, each country had some leverage over the other. Their relationship relating to arms transfers was what the scholar Keith Krause calls 'symmetrical interdependence.'<sup>33</sup>

## **Renegotiation of the Bases Agreement**

The renegotiation of the Bases Agreement in 1978 is relevant for Carter's arms transfer policy because it involved U.S. promises of large-scale arms transfers to the Philippines. Carter inherited these negotiations from Gerald Ford. Discussions with Ferdinand Marcos had started in 1975, but due to disagreements over the size of the U.S. military aid program, they had ended without result in the summer of 1976.<sup>34</sup> The major point of discussion between the two countries during the Carter Administration continued to be: 'How much compensation will be enough?'<sup>35</sup> With respect to Carter's arms transfer policy, the Philippines and South Korea resemble one another. In both cases, an increase in arms transfers came as compensation for the effects of another objective of U.S. security policy.

President Marcos and his advisers had noted the compensation paid by the U.S.A. to Spain, Greece and Turkey for military basing rights in those countries.<sup>36</sup> In analyzing those agreements, they felt that the military aid given to the Philippines was too small. This was also acknowledged internally in the U.S. administration, because, as explained by Barringer later, the Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay Port facility, 'compared with facilities elsewhere, [...] offer the greatest operational flexibility of any bases worldwide, because there is substantially no restriction by the Philippines on what we may use the bases for.'<sup>37</sup> However, in light of Carter's publicly embracing arms transfer restraint and human rights, it was important that the compensation should not be larger than the one offered by his predecessor.

A new agreement on the use of U.S. bases in the Philippines was eventually reached in January 1979. It provided the U.S.A. with unrestricted base rights, in return for

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<sup>33</sup> Keith Krause, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 198.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick M. Norton, "Preliminary Negotiations for the 1979 Agreement," in McDonald and Bendahmane, *U.S. Bases Overseas*, p. 76.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum (secret), Far East to Zbigniew Brzezinski, January 26, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, box 1, "Armacost Evening and Weekly Reports File, 1-2/78," folder.

<sup>36</sup> Norton, "Preliminary Negotiations for the 1979 Agreement," p. 77.

<sup>37</sup> Barringer, "The Strategic Importance of the Philippines," p. 118.

\$500 million in aid, split between grant military assistance, foreign military sales credits and security-supporting assistance.<sup>38</sup> The Carter Administration did not see the package as solely an arms-for-access to bases agreement. During Carter's two last years in office, another rationale became important: to assure allies and friends of U.S. strength and support. In March 1979, Carter argued that the compensation package had to be large because 'recent events in Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East have raised doubts about the willingness of the United States to sustain support for its friends and to honor its obligations.'<sup>39</sup> Although it was a large compensation package, the agreement was seen as a victory by the U.S. negotiators, because it was almost identical to the one that had been offered by Ford and refused by Marcos in 1976. Carter himself considered 'the amounts relatively modest in relation to the value which we derive from continued, unhampered operation of those facilities.'<sup>40</sup>

U.S. military assistance deliveries to the Philippines rose from 12.5 million in 1976 to \$33.3 million by 1980. Carter's restraint policy failed to have any influence on U.S. arms transfers to the Philippines because of the renegotiation of the bases agreement and because of the escalating superpower competition in East Asia.

## Human rights considerations

Because of the negative human rights records by the governments of South Korea and the Philippines, the public and Congress from the early 1960s had become increasingly critical of U.S. arms transfers to the two regimes. In Korea, it was especially the suppression and imprisonment of political opponents that troubled many critics.<sup>41</sup> For the Philippines, the list of problems relating to human rights and democracy was longer: (1) the Marcos Government had dismantled democracy and placed the country under martial law; (2) the regime continued to imprison and mistreat political opponents; (3) the government controlled the media; and (4) recent legislative elections were rigged in President Marco's favor.<sup>42</sup> The U.S. General Accounting Office defined gross violations of human rights as: 'torture or cruel,

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<sup>38</sup> Memorandum (secret), Cyrus Vance to the President, December 29, 1978 JCL, Plains File, Subject File, box 39, "State Department Evening Reports, 12/78," folder.

<sup>39</sup> Letter (confidential), Jimmy Carter to Lester I. Wolff, March 21, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-24, "FO 3-2 11/1/78-4/30/79," JCL.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum of conversation (secret), March 9, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 2, "Secret, Armacost Chron File, 3/10-15/77" folder.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Richard Holbrooke and Patt Derian to Mrs. Benson, June 5, 1978, NSA, *The Philippines: The Marcos Years, 1965-1986*, Fiche 266, Document 1286.

inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; prolonged detention without charges or trial; and other flagrant denials of the right of life, liberty and personal security.<sup>43</sup> By this definition, both of these East Asian governments were severe violators of human rights. Thus in accordance with section 502B of the Security Assistance Act, the law guiding assistance of military equipment and services, military assistance to them should be reduced.

On the basis of what Carter had expressed during the 1976 election campaign, Congress expected both South Korea and the Philippines to be punished for their violations of human rights. In deciding upon U.S. security assistance for fiscal year 1978, cuts to the two countries (as well as to Indonesia) were discussed within the administration. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recommended elimination of the military assistance program for the Philippines. Both Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski, however, opposed these cuts.<sup>44</sup> Carter and high-ranking officials publicly criticized both governments, but there are no examples of the administration using arms transfer sanctions against these countries. Preparing Carter for a meeting with key Congressmen on foreign assistance, Brzezinski noted that 'however strongly we all feel about human rights questions, the fact is that, wholesale changes would undermine security relationships which are of great importance to us.<sup>45</sup> Several Congressmen reacted to Carter's continued neglect of human rights violations by the governments of important allies. Donald Fraser, one of the most active human rights proponents in the House of Representatives, complained in mid-1978 that the administration's 'track record on consistency or even-handedness,' on human rights and military assistance 'is off to a dubious start.'<sup>46</sup> This is obvious when East Asia is compared with Latin America, where Carter reduced U.S. security assistance to several countries. However, compared to other strategically important countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, whose governments were also engaged in human rights violations, South Korea and the Philippines were treated with

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<sup>43</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Sales—An Increasing U.S. Role In Africa*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> International Security Assistance Budget Revisions (confidential), February 10, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 2, "Armacost Chron File, 2/11-17/77," folder; and memorandum (confidential), Jessica Tuchman and Robert M. Kimmitt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, February 7, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, box 10-32, "Human Rights, 2-4/77," folder.

<sup>45</sup> Emphasis in original. Memorandum (executive), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, March 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-25, "FO 3-2 1/20/77 - 3/8/77," folder.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in: Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*, Lanham, 1986, pp. 113-114.



selective consistency. Carter repeatedly criticized repressive regimes, but only governments in Latin America were considered strategically unimportant enough to warrant using arms transfer sanctions in response to violations of human rights. In his memoirs, Brzezinski would later comment that 'our influence was greater with weak and isolated countries than with those whom we shared vital security interests.'<sup>47</sup>

As a result of an initiative led by Democratic Representative Leo J. Ryan, Congress cut \$5 million of the \$18.1 million the Executive Branch had proposed in military aid to the Philippines for fiscal year 1979.<sup>48</sup> For fiscal year 1980, Congress repeated its action from the past year and cut \$5 million from the \$25 million in military grants proposed by the Executive Branch. Cyrus Vance heavily protested these cuts, because they sent a 'wrong signal to wrong place at wrong time.'<sup>49</sup> However, it is understandable that a majority of Congress believed this was exactly the right time and the right place to apply human rights considerations to military aid appropriations. Despite increasing internal opposition and international criticism, President Marcos had refused to lift the martial law which had been effective since 1972,<sup>50</sup> and the repression of dissidents was not alleviated. Vance's assertion is also incompatible with the May 1978 Presidential Directive on human rights, which said that 'countries with a poor or deteriorating record [on human rights] will receive less favorable consideration.'<sup>51</sup> In contrast to arms deliveries to Latin American countries, where the administration in some cases worked either in tandem with Congress or on its own initiative to restrain weapons exports because of the human rights situation, the small reductions in arms transfers for South Korea and the Philippines were the results of Congressional cuts in appropriations for military aid.

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<sup>47</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 – 1981*, New York, 1983, p. 128.

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum (secret), Far East to Zbigniew Brzezinski, January 26, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, box 1, "Armacost Evening and Weekly Reports File, 1-2/78," folder; and memorandum (confidential), Richard Holbrooke and Patt Derian to Mrs. Benson, June 5, 1978, NSA, *The Philippines: The Marcos Years, 1965–1986*, Fiche 266, Document 1286.

<sup>49</sup> Telegram, the Secretary of State to the Embassy Manila, March 1980, NSA, *The Philippines: The Marcos Years, 1965–1986*, Fiche 325, Document 164.

<sup>50</sup> The martial law was lifted January 17, 1981.

<sup>51</sup> Presidential Directive 30 (confidential), February 17, 1978, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 21–40" folder.

## Conclusion

The cases of South Korea and the Philippines show that when military and political factors were perceived to be of great importance, the Carter Administration did not apply human rights considerations to decisions on arms transfers. The major conditions that induced Carter to disregard his policy of restraint in arms transfers to these countries, although they gravely violated human rights, were the following:

- *U.S. security guarantees.* The U.S.A. had security treaties with South Korea and the Philippines, and U.S. weapons supplies were major components of the bilateral security arrangements.
- *Access to military bases.* The military bases in the Philippines were of great importance for U.S. security strategy in East Asia. The U.S. right to use the bases had always been exchanged for arms transfers to the Philippines. Carter could not reduce arms supplies to the Philippines without risking reduced U.S. access to the bases.
- *Compensating for less direct U.S. military engagement.* To live up to his election promise to withdraw U.S. ground forces from South Korea, Carter was forced to increase arms supplies to Seoul.
- *Showing U.S. strength and assertiveness.* In light of the growing superpower competition during the final two years of his tenure, Carter perceived it as necessary to demonstrate U.S. commitment toward friends and allies in East Asia. This was mainly done by supplying them with more and better weapons.

## Chapter 8

# Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia

From the mid-1960s onwards, the Middle Eastern countries rapidly increased their arms purchases. While they imported \$257 million worth of weapons in 1964, they bought for nearly \$3.9 billion in 1973.<sup>1</sup> The accumulation of arms was further stimulated by the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 and the ensuing oil-price increase. The explosion of the oil prices<sup>2</sup> provided the world's oil-exporting countries, most of them located in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, with the financial resources to increase their arms purchases considerably. Arms imports by OPEC members grew from \$254 million in 1964 to \$5.4 billion by 1976.<sup>3</sup> In turn, the oil-importing and weapons-producing countries were willing to provide most of the arms requested as a means of easing their own balance-of-payment problems. The U.S.A. was the leading supplier, accounting for nearly half of all arms exports to the Middle East in the period 1973 to 1977.<sup>4</sup>

Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia are grouped together in this chapter. In many instances, the Carter Administration balanced arms sales to one of these countries with sales to one or the two others to preserve and/or create a regional balance. These three countries also played central roles in Carter's attempt at creating peace in the Middle East, and they were recipients in what was at the time the largest U.S. arms deal ever, the "aircraft package." Therefore, to understand the rationales behind transfers to one country, it is necessary to refer to U.S. interests in and arms transfers to the two others.

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<sup>1</sup> Values in current dollars. The 1974 edition of ACDA's annual report on global arms transfers uses the geographical term *Near East*, which refers to Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, North Yemen, and South Yemen. This definition corresponds to the countries covered in the term the *Middle East* in later editions. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Trade* [henceforth ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1963–1973, Washington D.C., 1974, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> In 1973 oil prices increased by 400 percent. Chris Smith, "Third World Arms Control, Military Technology and Alternative Security," in Thomas Ohlson, ed., *Arms Transfer Limitations and Third World Security*, Oxford, 1988, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Both values in current dollars. ACDA, *WMEAT* 1963–1973, p. 73; and ACDA, *WMEAT* 1969–1978, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT* 1968–1977, p. 156.

The main purpose of this case study is to identify the objectives behind the sizeable U.S. arms-transfer programs to the countries of the Middle East, and explore if arms transfers to the region were compatible with PD-13. The transfer agreements discussed here will provide an overview and demonstrate the Carter Administration's objectives in the region. The decision in early 1978 to supply Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia with sophisticated fighter aircraft – the Middle East aircraft package – was the most controversial of all Carter's arms transfer decisions. Because the justifications for the aircraft package and the criticism it produced exemplify the problems Carter met in coupling his restraint policy with other foreign-policy objectives, this decision will be discussed in some detail.

## Continuity and change

Because the Middle East accounted for some three-quarters of all U.S. arms exports in 1976,<sup>5</sup> this was the region where the U.S.A. most needed to restrict its arms supplies if the restraint policy was to succeed.<sup>6</sup> Not only was the Middle East the region where the U.S.A. exported most of its arms, but the weapons were also more sophisticated than those exported to other Third World countries. Both the quantitative and the qualitative controls in PD-13 were thus highly relevant for the Middle East. Also important was how Congress and the public would judge the policy. Because much of the opposition to the arms-sales policy was based on criticism of transfers to the Middle East, Carter's restraint policy would probably be judged a failure if exports to this region were not restrained.

One of Carter's main foreign policy objectives was to reach a comprehensive peace agreement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was considered impossible unless the parties felt militarily secure. Therefore, the Carter Administration sought to create a military balance between the Israelis and the Arab states. In describing the arms transfer programs to the Middle East, Carter and senior foreign-policy officials often used the term 'even-handedness.'<sup>7</sup> This signified a reversal of the previous U.S. policy

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> This was recognized by administration officials. In a Congressional hearing on the arms transfer policy in February 1978, Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance Lucy Benson said that the Middle East was the big problem with respect to the restraint effort. *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations*, 1 and 2 February 1978, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Memorandum (confidential), Zbigniew Brzezinski and Frank Moore to the President, March 21, 1978, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], White House Central Files

of providing Israel with massive supplies of modern armaments, while supplying substantially less to Arab countries. Carter and his main foreign-policy advisers agreed that in order to get the Arab governments involved in negotiations, they would need to send 'a signal that moderation would be rewarded and that the US was prepared to parallel its military relationship to Israel with closer collaboration with the anti-Soviet and moderate Arab regimes.'<sup>8</sup> This reasoning was in accordance with what was argued by influential U.S. commentators like George Ball and Anthony Cordesman. They believed that to get Israel to compromise on territory, Washington would have to apply some pressure.<sup>9</sup> Carter's arms transfer policy could signify that this pressure would come by reducing arms transfers to Israel. However, this approach was never seriously considered. Instead, Carter chose to induce the parties to negotiate by providing them with sophisticated armaments.

In addition to the objective of reaching a peace agreement, Carter also used arms transfers to strengthen U.S. relations with key Arab states in hopes of containing Soviet influence in the Middle East. Such Soviet activities as military assistance in the form of arms and advisers for Ethiopia in the armed conflict with Somalia from July 1977, and support of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen's military incursions into the Yemen Arab Republic in February 1979 made Carter uneasy about Soviet intentions in the Middle East and the Red Sea region. Even more important was the collapse of the regime of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of Iran in January 1979. Although Moscow did not sponsor this upheaval, Carter was concerned that the Soviets might use it as an opportunity to increase their influence in the region. An interagency study group on the Middle East in April 1979 expressed concern that the result of the Iranian revolution would be 'determined, opportunistic Soviet efforts to exploit these stresses to displace U.S. influence in the area and to expand that of the

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[henceforth WHCF], FO-23, "FO 3-2 2/1/78-10/31/78" folder; and letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Frank Church, April 2, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-28, "FO 3-2 3/15/79-4/8/79" folder.

<sup>8</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 - 1981*, New York, 1983, p. 94. Echoing this argument, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance noted in his memoirs that 'Carter and I agreed that we should be prepared to furnish military equipment to key moderate Arab nations,' and that 'assisting moderate governments in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf was a major element of the administration's policy.' Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York, 1983, p. 32. The term "moderate Arab country" was used by the administration to indicate countries whose authorities had a pro-Western stance, as opposed to those who were pro-Soviet. When used in the context of the Arab/Israeli conflict it also implied that the country's government advocated a peaceful, as opposed to a military, solution to that conflict.

<sup>9</sup> See Anthony Cordesman: "How Much is Too Much," *Armed Forces Journal*, October 1977; and George Ball, "How to Save Israel in Spite of Herself," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 1977, pp. 453-471.

U.S.S.R. for ideological, strategic and economic purposes.’<sup>10</sup> It further argued that the U.S.A. faced ‘a problem of perceptions and expectations,’ and concluded that ‘this political and psychological crisis can only be contained by forceful and purposeful U.S. action.’<sup>11</sup> With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, U.S. perceptions of Soviet threat grew, and Carter came under fire from both Democrats and Republicans for being weak on Soviet power ambitions. Through these geopolitical crises, the administration repeatedly used arms supplies to friends and allies in the Middle East to increase its influence and reduce that of the Soviets.

Although the main beneficiaries of Carter’s arms transfer programs in the Middle East were Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, also other countries received considerable quantities of weapons. Arms sales agreements with Jordan increased from \$73 million in fiscal year 1976 to \$101 million in fiscal year 1977, while sales agreements with Kuwait increased from \$17 million to \$157 million during the same period.<sup>12</sup> This indicates that from the outset Carter was prepared to let other objectives than restraint in arms transfers guide his Middle East policy.

## **Arms transfers to Egypt**

When Egypt aligned itself with the Soviet Union and became Moscow’s most important ally in the Middle East in 1955, the U.S.A. broke its arms transfer relationship with the country. In July 1972, Cairo evicted most of the Soviet military advisers from Egypt<sup>13</sup> and shed its relations with Moscow, although continuing to purchase Soviet arms until mid-1975.<sup>14</sup> After the break with the Soviet Union, Egypt developed closer ties with the U.S.A. and other NATO countries. West European producers, mainly France and the United Kingdom, became Egypt’s dominant arms suppliers.<sup>15</sup> While the Nixon Administration did not export weapons to Egypt,<sup>16</sup> Gerald Ford initiated a small-scale arms export program for Egypt in 1976.<sup>17</sup> Prior to the

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<sup>10</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Fritz Ermarth to Les Denend et al., March 30, 1979, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 3, “Chron File 4/79” folder.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Values in current dollars. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> The remaining Soviet advisors were expelled in 1974.

<sup>14</sup> *Congressional Record – House of Representatives*, 14 March 1978, p. 2049.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 166.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis Sorley, *Arms Transfers Under Nixon: A Policy Analysis*, Kentucky, 1983, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Sales—An Increasing U.S. Role In Africa*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 3.

Carter presidency, the U.S.A. had only supplied Egypt with six C-130 transport aircraft, equipment for an air surveillance station and some military training.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1976 election campaign, candidate Carter portrayed himself as strong and unwavering on Israeli security, criticizing many of the previous administration's arms transfer agreements with Israel's Arab neighbors, and arguing against increased arms transfers to Egypt.<sup>19</sup> However, already in August 1977, Carter accepted an Egyptian request for military equipment valued at about \$240 million.<sup>20</sup> During Carter's tenure, the U.S.A. became Egypt's major arms supplier: from \$62 million in fiscal year 1976, U.S. arms transfers had soared to about \$2.4 billion by fiscal year 1980.<sup>21</sup>

There were several rationales behind the rise in arms exports to Egypt, such as the effort to reduce Soviet influence in the Middle East, and increase that of the U.S.A. Connected with this was the objective of keeping Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in power. As was the case with the Saudi royal family, imports of high-quality weapons were important for the Egyptian authorities in retaining the support of the country's military officers. Egypt's suspension of Soviet military assistance in 1972 significantly reduced the flow of arms to the country. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance represented a common attitude in the administration when, in July 1977, he argued that without U.S. arms transfers to Egypt, Sadat could be replaced by a regime 'headed by a military man, who would be under intense pressure to resume the military supply relationship with the Soviets.'<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Vance argued, 'a demonstration by the United States of support for Egypt's legitimate security needs now is of critical political importance to Sadat.'<sup>23</sup> However, the main rationale for a majority of U.S. arms transfers to Egypt, at least up to late-1979, was probably Carter's pursuit of an Israeli-Arab peace agreement. Within the administration, there was agreement that 'Egypt is a key country in making progress toward peace,'<sup>24</sup> and therefore, that

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<sup>18</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Warren Christopher to the President, April 17, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-23, "FO 3-2 5/1/78 - 6/30/78" folder.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Speech by Jimmy Carter, 6 June 1976. *The Presidential Campaign 1976, Volume One, Part One, Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> *Proposed Sales of Military Equipment and Services to Egypt: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives*, September 15, 1977, Washington D.C., 1977, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Values in current dollars. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Cyrus Vance to the President, July 26, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-23, "FO 3-2 8/1/77-9/2/77" folder.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Memorandum (executive), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, March 8, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-25 "FO 3-2 1/20/77-3/8/77" folder.

'Egypt, too, must have reasonable assurance of its ability to defend itself if it is to continue the peace negotiations with confidence.'<sup>25</sup> Sadat's groundbreaking visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 made it even easier for Carter to accept a closer U.S.–Egyptian arms transfer relationship. The U.S. demonstration of support grew in significance as the Camp David negotiations progressed, and Egypt became almost ostracized by its Arab neighbors for engaging in peace negotiations with Israel.<sup>26</sup> This led to a withdrawal of Arab financial support for Egyptian arms purchases. Through military grants and credits, and direct economic assistance, the U.S.A. made up for lost Arab financial support.

After the fall of the Shah's regime in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the announcement of the Carter Doctrine on 23 January 1980, Egypt gained even greater significance for Washington's strategic interests in the Middle East. While the quest for Arab–Israeli peace had been the main rationale for arms transfers to Egypt up until then, safeguarding U.S. security now became the chief objective behind the Egyptian arms transfer program. An unnamed administration official said to *The New York Times* in January 1980 that 'because the Administration now wants to strengthen its military presence in the Middle East and South Asia, the idea of increasing Egypt's military strength is even more attractive.'<sup>27</sup> However, to assume a partnership role, Sadat demanded a closer U.S.–Egyptian arms transfer relationship and symbolic parity with Israel and Saudi Arabia. In line with this, in late 1979 and early 1980, Egypt requested the purchase of an unknown number of F-15 fighter aircraft, 600 tanks, 500 artillery pieces, 2,000 troop carriers, and five Hawk anti-aircraft missile batteries.<sup>28</sup> There are no indications that Carter considered accepting all these requests. Moreover, he was certain to face a defeat in Congress if he should propose an arms package of this size and sophistication. After intense bilateral discussions, Carter in early 1980 offered Egypt \$1.1 billion in credits for purchase of U.S.

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<sup>25</sup> Secretary Vance's News Conference, February 14, 1978. *Department of State Bulletin*, p. 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Policy Review Committee (secret), September 20, 1979, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 24, "Meetings—PRC 123: 9/20/79" folder.

<sup>27</sup> "White House Asking \$1.1 Billion Extra in Arms Aid to Cairo," *The New York Times*, January 21, 1980, pp. 1 and 8.

<sup>28</sup> Pat Towell, "Carter Mideast Arms Sales Policies Received Skeptically in Congress," *Congressional Quarterly*, March 3, 1979, p. 386; and Michael T. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, Austin, TX, 1984, p. 146.



armaments, and promised it F-15s at a later stage.<sup>29</sup> The package included 40 F-16 fighters with associated missiles, 600 Maverick air-to-surface missiles, 244 M-60A3 tanks, 550 M-113 armored personnel carriers, and a variety of other military equipment.<sup>30</sup>

This huge arms package demonstrates a marked change in U.S. arms transfer policy to the Middle East during Carter's presidency. Carter's decision in early 1978 to supply F-5s to Egypt and F-15s to Saudi Arabia met with heated protests from Israeli authorities, Jewish lobbying organizations in Washington, and several Congressmen. However, the 1980 decision to supply Egypt with \$1.1 billion in modern weapons, including one of the world's most sophisticated jet fighters, failed to produce controversy in Washington or protests from the Israeli government. From being ineligible for any arms other than "non-lethal" equipment in 1976, Egypt had now become a favored recipient of highly sophisticated arms.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the Carter Administration implemented its arms transfer restraint policy under certain conditions only. These conditions were never present in Egypt. Throughout Carter's presidency, the main rationales behind arms transfers to Egypt were to ensure Egyptian support for the U.S.-led Middle East peace negotiations, and to make sure that the Soviet Union did not resume its influence in the country.<sup>31</sup> There was a general understanding within the administration that these objectives demanded a large-scale arms transfer relationship with Egypt.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Cairo to buy F-16's Now and May Get F-15's Later," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1980, p. 8; and "White House Asking \$1.1. Billion Extra in Arms Aid to Cairo," *The New York Times*, January 21, 1980, pp. 1 and 8.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Jimmy Carter to the Secretary of State, July 16, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 6-9/80" folder; and Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, p. 146.

<sup>31</sup> See memorandum (confidential), Jimmy Carter to the Secretary of State, August 1, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations, 6/77-4/78" folder; memorandum (confidential), Jimmy Carter to the Secretary of State, August 3, 1979, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations, 8/79-5/80" folder; and memorandum (confidential), Jimmy Carter to the Secretary of State, July 16, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 6-9/80" folder.

<sup>32</sup> See memorandum (secret), Robert Hunter, Gary Sick and Robert Kimmitt to Zbigniew Brzezinski, September 19, 1979, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Box 24, "Meetings-PRC 123; 9/20/79" folder; and Policy Review Committee (secret), September 20, 1979, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 24, "Meetings-PRC 123: 9/20/79" folder.

## Arms transfers to Israel

Washington's principal objective in the Middle East had long been the security of Israel, and the U.S.A. had been Israel's major arms supplier since the early 1960s. Between 1964 and 1973, Israel purchased \$1.5 billion worth of arms. Of this, \$1.1 billion was supplied by the U.S.A.<sup>33</sup> Because of the close relationship, and since Israel was located amid potentially hostile neighbors and possessed limited manpower, Washington's arms transfer program to Israel differed in scope and magnitude from its programs to other Third World countries. U.S. weapons supplies to Israel were meant to ensure that, in case of armed conflict, Israel would be able to fight and defeat an alliance of several countries, without needing direct U.S. involvement. Washington also believed that a strong Israeli military might contribute to slowing down the Israeli nuclear arms program, thus reducing the risk that nuclear weapons could be used in an actual conflict. The nuclear arms question was no doubt used by the Israelis as a coercion tactic to increase U.S. arms supplies.

U.S. arms transfers to Israel increased further after Israel was caught off guard and experienced heavy losses when Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked on October 6, 1973.<sup>34</sup> During the Yom Kippur War, the Nixon Administration airlifted large quantities of arms from U.S. military reserve stocks to Israel.<sup>35</sup> After the war, Washington built up Israeli defense forces, providing it with military aircraft of the latest technology, modern missiles, and tanks. U.S. foreign military sales agreements to Israel increased from about \$162 million in fiscal year 1973 to about \$980 million in fiscal year 1976.<sup>36</sup>

Prior to the development of PD-13, Carter had refused some Israeli arms requests. On February 16, 1977, acting on recommendations from the State Department, Carter reversed a decision by the Ford Administration to sell Israel CBU-72 cluster concussion bombs.<sup>37</sup> The same month, Washington refused Israel the right to sell 24 Kfir fighter-bombers to Ecuador. The U.S.A. could veto the sale because the aircraft were equipped with General Electric J79 engines. The Israelis notified the Department

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<sup>33</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1963-1973*, p. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 156.

<sup>35</sup> The U.S. airlifted 22,500 tons of weapons to Israel from the outset of the conflict until November 1973. See Jeffrey G. Barlow and Colin S. Gray, "Inexcusable Restraint: The Decline of American Military Power in the 1970s," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1985, pp. 55-56.

<sup>36</sup> Values in current dollars. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Letter (executive), Morris J. Amitay to Walter F. Mondale, February 17, 1977, WHCF, TA-6, "TA 3 1/20/77-5/31/77" folder; and "President Cancels Israeli Bomb Sale," *The New York Times*, February 18, 1977, p. 11.

of State of its intentions to sell Kfirs to Ecuador in October 1976, and then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had given positive feedback on the proposed sale. Therefore, the refusal by Carter took the Israelis by surprise. These two refusals made Israeli authorities and Israel supporters wary of the new president's arms transfer policy, increased Israeli lobbying efforts, and helped to place Israel in an exceptional category in PD-13. However, it is unlikely that the refusals were ever intended to initiate a more restrained U.S. arms transfer policy towards Israel. CBUs would not be sold to any country during Carter's term of office, and the Kfir refusal was part of the objective to restrain exports of jet fighters to Latin America. These two refusals were caused by changes in U.S. policy towards other areas than towards Israel.

Israel was originally placed among the non-exempt countries in PD-13. After intense lobbying efforts from Israeli authorities and pressure by powerful senators like Frank Church, Clifford Case, and Jacob Javits,<sup>38</sup> and internal pressure by Vice-President Walter Mondale and Carter's domestic policy adviser Stuart Eizenstat, the directive was 'revised in a way which we felt met the legitimate concerns of Israeli security and yet did not place Israel, as its supporters desired in the same category as America's principal allies.'<sup>39</sup> PD-13 said that 'the United States will remain faithful to its treaty obligations, and will also honor its historic responsibilities regarding Israel's security.'<sup>40</sup> This special mention of Israel was too ambiguous to be useful as a guideline. To ease concern among Israel-friendly Americans and Israeli authorities, Cyrus Vance promised Israeli foreign minister Yigal Allon on May 18, 1977, the day before the announcement of the new arms transfer policy, that the U.S.A. would continue to supply Israel with advanced weaponry.<sup>41</sup>

On March 15, 1978, Israeli armed forces attacked Palestinian bases in Lebanon. Among the weapons used were U.S.-made F-15 fighter aircraft<sup>42</sup> and CBU cluster bombs.<sup>43</sup> The offensive Israeli use of U.S.-supplied weapons broke with the 1952

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<sup>38</sup> Letter (executive), Frank Church, Clifford Case, Richard Stone and Jacob Javits to Jimmy Carter, October 6, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO 74 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>39</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 92.

<sup>40</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>41</sup> "Carter Pledges Special Treatment for Israel on Advanced Weapons," *The New York Times*, 13 May 1977, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> This was the first time the F-15 was used in combat operations.

<sup>43</sup> Letter (executive), James Abourezk to Jimmy Carter, 20 March 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO74 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; and letter (executive), Paul N. McCloskey to Jimmy Carter, 10 April 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO74 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

U.S.–Israeli Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, which stipulated that weapons supplied to Israel by the U.S.A. ‘will be used solely to maintain its internal security [and] its legitimate self-defense,’ and would not be used in ‘any act of aggression against any other state.’<sup>44</sup> The Israeli offensive was criticized on Capitol Hill, and Democratic Senator James Abourezk recommended that Carter ‘cut military aid to Israel both to comply with the binding provisions of the sales act and to fully and clearly demonstrate the United States’ response to the Israeli invasion and its disastrous consequences for thousands of civilians.’<sup>45</sup> This recommendation was not followed, and the Israelis were not punished by any arms sanctions. It is unlikely that cutting military aid was ever seriously discussed within the administration. Not only had Carter repeatedly stressed that he was unwavering on Israeli security, but because of the strong sympathy for Israel in the U.S. electorate, sanctions would have been impossible to combine with Carter’s objective of re-election.

The ambiguous language of PD-13 did not specify whether Israeli arms requests would be judged against the arms transfer controls, and neither Carter nor any administration official explained how Israel would be affected by PD-13. It is therefore impossible to evaluate arms transfers to Israel against the objectives of PD-13. What is clear, however, is that U.S. arms transfers to Israel in the period January 1977 to January 1981 represented a continuation of existing U.S. policy. The value of arms transfers to Israel during Carter stayed at approximately the same level as it had under his predecessors. Israel received about \$2.7 billion worth of arms through the Foreign Military Sales program in both the period 1973 to 1976 and the period 1977 to 1980.<sup>46</sup>

## **Arms transfers to Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia was, together with Iran, the country to which the U.S.A. increased its arms sales the most during the 1970s. Top among U.S. objectives in Saudi Arabia were to block Soviet influence and secure access to Saudi oil. In 1979, 25 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves were located in Saudi Arabia,<sup>47</sup> and the country

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<sup>44</sup> Letter (executive), Cyrus Vance to John J. Sparkman, 5 April 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, “FO 3-2/CO74 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder.

<sup>45</sup> Letter (executive), James Abourezk to Jimmy Carter, 20 March 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, “FO 3-2/CO74 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder.

<sup>46</sup> DSAA, FMS, 1980 edition, pp. 7–8.

<sup>47</sup> “On the Arms Sales Circuit, It’s Business, But Not as Usual,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 1979, p. 3.

supplied the U.S.A. with 23 percent of all its oil imports.<sup>48</sup> As the world's largest oil-exporter, Saudi Arabia was the country that profited most from the high oil prices. This increased income provided it with the financial means to upgrade its armed forces. Arms purchases by Saudi Arabia increased from \$44 million in 1970 to \$470 million in 1976.<sup>49</sup>

Carter had during the 1976 election campaign criticized many of the previous administration's arms transfers to Saudi Arabia as well as to Egypt. Once in office, however, Carter portrayed Saudi Arabia as a moderate Arab regime, and 'one of our closest allies, staunchest friends and economic partners.'<sup>50</sup> Throughout his presidency, Carter, as historian Gaddis Smith phrases it, balanced between keeping 'Saudi Arabia happy without damaging relations with Israel, or, more precisely, without incurring the politically expensive wrath of Israel's supporters in the United States.'<sup>51</sup> Carter continued, and even expanded the arms supply programs to Riyadh.

One illustration of how Carter broke with his campaign statements on arms transfers to Saudi Arabia came in April 1977, when he responded favorably to a Saudi request to purchase 580 anti-aircraft Improved Hawk Missiles. Commenting in September 1976 on Ford's decision to supply Saudi Arabia with Maverick anti-aircraft missiles, which are comparable in sophistication to the Hawk missiles, Carter argued that:

*There is no reason to think these missiles will increase security and stability in the Middle East. There is no reason to think they can be used only for defense. There are only reasons to fear that we will increase the chance of conflict. No administration which was sensitive to the climate in the Middle East would let the sale go forward.*<sup>52</sup>

Three months into his presidency, Carter had changed his mind. He now claimed that the transfer of anti-aircraft missiles was important for U.S.-Saudi relations, and that the Saudis needed the missiles for protection of their oil fields.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Letter (executive), Douglas J. Bennet to Fred Richmond, March 7, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO45 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>49</sup> Values in constant 1977 dollars. ACDA, *WMEAT 1968-1977*, p. 145.

<sup>50</sup> "Press Conference with President Carter," February 19, 1978, *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs* [online]. Available from: <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ezn0> [accessed 25 July 2003].

<sup>51</sup> Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years*, New York, 1986, p. 170.

<sup>52</sup> Letter (executive), Benjamin S. Rosenthal to Jimmy Carter, April 18, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO134 1/20/77-1/20/78" folder.

<sup>53</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Benjamin Rosenthal, May 19, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO134 1/20/77-1/20/78" folder.

Saudi Arabia resembled the cases of Iran and Egypt in that the U.S.A., through arms supplies, was seeking to defend a moderate regime from both internal and external threats. As in most authoritarian regimes, the officer corps was a major political force which it was imperative for the royal family to keep satisfied. This could best be done by a steady supply of modern armaments.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the Saudi royal family felt threatened by internal Islamic uprisings like the one that toppled the Shah in January 1979. This fear grew when Muslim insurgents seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca in November 1979, and an insurrection broke out among Shi'a Muslims in eastern Saudi Arabia in the same month. Externally, the Saudis felt threatened by the increased Soviet influence in the area, the militarily powerful Iraq and the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen).

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown stated before Congress that Saudi Arabia was threatened by several countries.<sup>55</sup> However, at least from the middle of 1978, Washington's sponsorship of the Saudi Arabian military buildup was mainly a response to what was seen as Soviet expansionism. As the U.S.-Soviet competition for influence in the Middle East and South Asia intensified from late 1978, U.S. arms transfers to Saudi Arabia increased.

The superpower competition gained momentum when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Brzezinski feared that the invasion of Afghanistan was part of 'the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean.'<sup>56</sup> Harold Brown was one of the staunchest supporters of an improved security relationship with Saudi Arabia. He argued in the same way as Brzezinski, and warned that the invasion could provide 'the Soviets an outlet to the Arabian Sea, an ambition they have long cherished, going back to Czarist times, and one which if realized would threaten supply lines in the Indian Ocean both to Japan and to Europe from the oil fields of the Middle East.'<sup>57</sup> To obstruct Soviet incursions into the region, Brown envisaged a 'number of cooperative endeavors,' including contingency basing of U.S.

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<sup>54</sup> Steve Chan, "The Consequences of Expensive Oil on Arms Transfers," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1980, p. 237.

<sup>55</sup> See statements by Vance and Brown in *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Hearings Before the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives*, May 8, 9, 10, and 16, 1978, Washington D.C., 1978, pp. 34-36.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, December 26, 1979, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, box 17, "Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf-Afghanistan: 12/26/79-1/4/80" folder.

<sup>57</sup> News Conference by Harold Brown in Beijing, January 9, 1980, the National Security Archive, *China and the United States, 1960-1998*, Fiche 99, Document 490.

forces, joint military exercises, and building and improving Saudi military facilities for use by U.S. armed forces in crisis situations.<sup>58</sup> A major factor in this planning was to increase arms supplies to Saudi Arabia. However, there was opposition to this policy within the administration. It is probable that Gary Sick, the National Security Council officer responsible for the Middle East, represented a normal position, when he in June 1980 argued that 'the policy discussions about Saudi arms sales are beginning to sound more and more like the discussions we had in 1977 and 1978 about our relationship with the Shah,' and warned of the possible consequences of the 'growing impulse to write the Saudis a blank check *a la* Iran in 1972 as an inducement for a much closer relationship on security issues.'<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, Carter was under heavy pressure to satisfy domestic clamor for firmer action against the Soviets, and followed the advice of Brown and Brzezinski to expand the arms transfer program.

Arms transfers to Saudi Arabia during the Carter Administration represented a slight change in U.S. policy – a change that was not in line with the arms transfer restraint policy. U.S. arms transfers to Saudi Arabia increased from about \$927 million worth of arms in fiscal year 1976, to over \$2.7 billion in fiscal year 1980.<sup>60</sup> After the fall of the Shah, Saudi Arabia became the single largest recipient of U.S. weapons. Not only did the value of arms transfers more than double: the arms sold were also more sophisticated than previously. Carter and his main foreign policy-advisers believed that their objectives in Saudi Arabia – guaranteeing Western access to Persian Gulf oil, ensuring internal stability, and after the crisis in Iran and Afghanistan, developing direct U.S.–Saudi military cooperation – could not be achieved without large-scale arms transfers.<sup>61</sup> Such an approach could not be combined with a policy of restraint in arms transfers to Saudi Arabia, so the objectives of PD-13 were given lowest priority.

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum (secret), Harold Brown to The Secretary of State and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, June 16, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80–6/80" folder.

<sup>59</sup> Emphasis in original. Memorandum (secret), Gary Sick to Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 16, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80–6/80" folder.

<sup>60</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> See memorandum (secret), Gary Sick to Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 10, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80–6/80" folder; memorandum (secret), Harold Brown to The Secretary of State and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, June 16, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80–6/80" folder; and letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Benjamin Rosenthal, May 19, 1977, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO134 1/20/77–1/20/78" folder.

## The aircraft package

Early in 1978, Carter decided to sell Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel jet fighters worth \$4.8 billion. Vance and other administration officials justified this 'aircraft package' on the grounds that it would support the ongoing peace process in the Middle East, reinforce Israeli security, and strengthen relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, both seen as moderate Arab countries.<sup>62</sup> Even though the requests from all three countries were based on negotiations and commitments made by the Nixon and Ford Administrations, this was the most controversial arms-sale decision made by Carter.

The proposed sale of F-15s to Saudi Arabia was subject to considerable disagreement within the Carter Administration. The majority in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the Office of Politico-Military Affairs and the Bureau of Congressional Affairs in the Department of State opposed the sale because they believed it would lead to an arms race in the region, as well as being against the spirit of PD-13. They also believed Congress would veto the proposal.<sup>63</sup> Pentagon, the National Security Council and the other State Department bureaus, however, supported the sale, arguing that refusal would harm bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia and the objective of reaching an Arab-Israeli peace agreement.<sup>64</sup> Carter accepted these arguments, and in May 1977 assured Saudi Crown Prince Fahd that he would decide favorably on the request.<sup>65</sup>

Carter postponed the Congressional notification of the three-nation jet sale proposal until 4 February 1978, probably fearing a Congressional veto. Carter and his foreign policy advisers knew the transfers would be unpopular with many on Capitol Hill. In July 1977, Carter had, amid heavy criticism, forced the sales of AWACS to Iran through Congress, and it is likely that he did not want another highly controversial and unpopular arms sale issue to reach Congress so shortly afterwards. Sales of sophisticated fighters to Saudi Arabia and Egypt were almost certain to be disapproved by Congress if decided on separately. But NSC press officer Jerry Schecter argued that Congress would 'vote for the Arab sales if it seemed likely that

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<sup>62</sup> *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia*, p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> "F-15 Sale to Saudis Opposed," *The Washington Post*, September 3, 1977; and Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 183.

<sup>64</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Executive-Legislative Consultation on U.S. Arms Sales*, Washington D.C., 1982, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



the Israeli sale alone would not be approved.<sup>66</sup> The sales to Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia were therefore presented as a package. On April 28, 1978, the formal notification was transmitted to Congress. The package was to consist of 50 F-5Es worth \$400 million to Egypt, 75 F-16s and 15 F-15s worth \$1.9 billion to Israel, and 60 F-15s worth \$2.5 billion to Saudi Arabia.<sup>67</sup>

This was the first time that Congress had to decide on an arms sales *package arrangement*. The 1976 Arms Export Control Act stipulated that all arms sales should be considered separately. A majority of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations resented the packaging, arguing that such linkage infringed on Congressional procedures.<sup>68</sup> The signals from Carter about the linking were ambiguous. On the one hand, he said that the proposals were merely individual requests submitted to Congress on the same day and that 'the Congress will not receive nor act on these proposals as a package.'<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, he presented Congress with a take-it-or-leave-it approach, reserving the possibility of withdrawing all sales if one of them were rejected: 'If the Congress should accept a portion and reject another, then my intent is to withdraw the sales proposals altogether.'<sup>70</sup> Republican Representative William Green represented a common attitude when he said that 'the President may have taken the ribbon off the package, but the package is still not unwrapped.'<sup>71</sup>

Debate between the proponents and the opponents of the arms package revolved around its impact on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the military balance in the Middle East, U.S. arms transfer commitments to Israel, and Israeli security.

The major concern of the Congressional opposition was that the F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia would present a threat to the security of Israel. Because of the F-15's long-range capabilities, it was believed that Saudi Arabia for the first time would be 'placed on Israel's strategic map,' and that the sale would increase 'the likelihood of Saudi

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<sup>66</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jerry Schecter to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, February 21, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, "NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 1-4/78" folder.

<sup>67</sup> Jo L. Husbands, "The Arms Connection: Jimmy Carter and the Politics of Military Exports," in Cindy Cannizzo, ed., *The Gun Merchants: Politics and Policies of the Major Suppliers*, New York, 1980, p. 22.

<sup>68</sup> Letter (executive), Frank Church to Cyrus Vance, April 21, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-26, "FO 3-2 4/1/78-4/30/78" folder.

<sup>69</sup> "Press Conference with President Carter," April 25, 1978, *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 777.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia*, p. 6.

involvement in any future Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>72</sup> The Saudi Arabian air base Tabuk is only 150 miles from the Israeli port of Eilat, and 275 miles from Tel Aviv, a distance that could be covered by the F-15. Harold Brown failed to discredit the argument that the planes could reach Israel from Saudi Arabia, but stated that they were not intended for attacks against Israel: they were, he said, needed by Saudi Arabia as defense against such hostile neighbors as the Soviet-supplied regimes of Iraq, the People's Republic of Yemen and Ethiopia.<sup>73</sup> The same line of argument was used in justifying the F-5 sale to Egypt. Brown emphasized that Egypt needed the F-5s to defend itself against radical regimes in North Africa, such as Libya and Ethiopia.<sup>74</sup> According to Carter, the aircraft package would strengthen Israeli security and be in the 'best interest of our own country and of Israel.'<sup>75</sup> In a standard reply to legislators concerned about the transfers, the President argued that, despite these sales, Israel would still enjoy 'a substantial margin of air superiority in the region.'<sup>76</sup>

In the official announcement of the sale, Vance stressed that the overriding objective was to support the ongoing Middle East peace negotiations.<sup>77</sup> In a letter to Frank Church, who was Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and an opponent of the aircraft package, Vance argued that the sales would help the peace efforts because 'these governments will all be more forthcoming in efforts to reach a Middle East settlement if their basic security needs are met.'<sup>78</sup>

This was an important consideration, but there were other rationales as well. Carter sought to improve the relations with Saudi Arabia and increase U.S. influence over Saudi energy and financial politics. A confidential Senate report leaked to *The New York Times* estimated that a refusal of the Saudi F-15 request 'could make the Saudis less willing to increase oil production to meet Western needs in the early 1980's.'<sup>79</sup> In

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<sup>72</sup> Letter (executive), Benjamin Rosenthal and 20 other members of the House International Relations Committee to the President, March 10, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-23, "FO 3-2 3/1/78-3/31/78" folder.

<sup>73</sup> Statement Harold Brown, *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia*, p. 36.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Press Conference with President Carter, April 25, 1978, *Public Papers of the President*, p. 777.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum (executive), Peter Tarnoff to Zbigniew Brzezinski, February 28, 1978, JCL, WHCF, TA-10, "TA 3/CO134 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>77</sup> Statement by Cyrus Vance at Press Conference, April 28, 1978, *Public Papers of the President*, p. 801.

<sup>78</sup> Letter (executive), Cyrus Vance to Frank Church, April 28, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-26, "FO 3-2 4/1/78-4/30/78" folder.

<sup>79</sup> "Senate Study Sees a U.S. Dilemma in Saudi Jet Sale," *The New York Times*, March 23, 1978, p. 13.

March 1978, the Saudis linked the willingness of the U.S.A. to supply it with F-15s, with its oil policy. In a letter to Walter Mondale, the Saudi Ambassador in Washington Ali Alireza emphasized that 'Saudi Arabia possesses 25 % of the world's proven oil reserves and has a special responsibility to itself and to the Free World to assure the protection of this strategic resource.'<sup>80</sup> Riyadh perceived it as important to obtain access to the same weapons as the two other main U.S. regional allies, Iran and Israel, not least because such a sale would symbolize a strong U.S. commitment to Saudi security. In a letter to the Department of State, King Khalid made it clear that the outcome of the decision would be a test of U.S.-Saudi cooperation, pointing out that Saudi Arabia's 'long and increasingly close relationship with the United States is, even with all of its proven mutual benefits, still at only an early stage of reciprocal worth.'<sup>81</sup> This heavy pressure from Riyadh probably contributed to Carter's insistence on the sale proposal against heavy resistance from within Congress. The relative pragmatism of Israeli authorities may also have contributed. Publicly, the Israelis strongly objected to the arms package. However, in confidential discussions with administration officials, Tel Aviv showed more flexibility. In a meeting with Brown, Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman said that 'there was no question that it was more important that Israel get aircraft than that Saudi Arabia and Egypt not get the planes they want.'<sup>82</sup>

The deep and longstanding U.S.-Israeli relationship and the influence of Jewish and other Israel supporters in U.S. politics made it difficult for U.S. legislators to support the sale of modern jet fighters to the two Arab countries. Jewish interest-groups, especially the large and influential American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), campaigned against the sales even before the proposals were officially announced.<sup>83</sup> Jerry Schecter noted that lawmakers had 'been hit with strong-arm lobbying including heavy doses of constituent mail, telephone calls and personal visits by the AIPAC staff.'<sup>84</sup> This led to some opposition to the E-5 sale to Egypt,<sup>85</sup> but not nearly enough

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<sup>80</sup> Letter (executive), Ali A. Alireza to Walter F. Mondale, March 15, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO 134 3/1/78-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>81</sup> "Saudi Leaders Appeal for F15s for Defense," *The Washington Post*, May 14, 1978, pp. 1 and 14.

<sup>82</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Madeleine Albright for the file, March 28, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 2, "Chron File 3/78" folder.

<sup>83</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jerry Schecter to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, February 11, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, "NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 1-4/78" folder.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

for it to be refused by a majority in Congress. Opposition to the F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia, however, was stronger, and one month before the proposal was sent to Congress for decision, NSC Congressional Relations Officer Madeleine Albright believed both Houses of Congress would veto the Saudi request.<sup>86</sup>

Several senators and representatives introduced resolutions of disapproval.<sup>87</sup> Among the legislators opposed to the package (mainly the F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia) were both Democrats and Republicans. They included influential senators like Democrats Henry Jackson, Sam Nunn and Frank Church, and Republicans Jacob Javits, Clifford P. Case and Robert Dole, and members of Congress like Benjamin Rosenthal, Jonathan Bingham, and Donald Fraser.<sup>88</sup> Two forces were at work in the opposition to the package: Israel supporters, and those who favored U.S. restraint in arms transfers.

To ease the concern that Israeli security would be impaired, the Carter Administration promised to provide Israel with 20 more F-15s in 1983–84.<sup>89</sup> This had not been discussed within the administration when it had decided on the arms package. It was a direct result of Congressional criticism, which indicates that the package was based more on political than military considerations. Carter argued that ‘the number of aircraft proposed for each of the countries has been carefully considered to insure a regional balance.’<sup>90</sup> However, since Egypt and Saudi Arabia were not promised follow-

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<sup>85</sup> See letter (executive), Eilberg to the President, February 14, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, “FO 3-2/CO134 1/20/77–1/20/78” folder; memorandum (secret), Jerry Schecter to Zbigniew Brzezinski, February 27, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, “NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 1–4/78” folder; and letter (executive), J. Herbert Burke and 14 other Congressmen to the President, March 6, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-26, “FO 3-2 3/1/78–3/31/78” folder.

<sup>86</sup> Memorandum (secret), Madeleine Albright to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, March 17, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, “NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 1–4/78” folder.

<sup>87</sup> *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia*, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> See letter (executive), Benjamin Rosenthal et al. to the President, March 10, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-23, “FO 3-2 3/1/78–3/31/78” folder; letter (executive), Henry M. Jackson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Sam Nunn to the President April 25, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-27, “FO 3-2 5/1/78–5/15/78” folder; memorandum (executive), Frank Moore to the President, May 1, 1978, JCL, WHCF, ND-50, “ND 18 5/1/78–5/18/78” folder; “Panel Deadlocks on Mideast Jets; Victory for Carter,” *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1978, pp. 1; and “These New Realities,” *The Washington Post*, May 16, 1978, pp. 1 and 10;

<sup>89</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to John Sparkman, May 9, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, “FO 3-2/CO134 1/20/77–1/20/81” folder.

<sup>90</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to James Abourezk, May 12, 1978, WHCF, FO-27, “FO 3-2 5/1/78–5/15/78” folder.

up deliveries of additional aircraft, the decision to increase the number of F-15s to Israel cannot be seen as being compatible with this argument.<sup>91</sup>

Much of the congressional concern derived from the characteristics of the F-15. Proponents and opponents of the Saudi sale debated whether the aircraft was a defensive or offensive weapons system, and the arguments resembled those used in the discussions over the sale of AWACS to Iran one year earlier. While administration officials described the F-15 as an air defense interceptor, the opposition argued that the F-15 was an offensive weapons system. According to the Director of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, Morris Amitay, the F-15 was a 'potent bomber – not only an interceptor [...] capable of long-range attacks and would enable Saudi Arabia or pilots of other Arab countries to strike deep into Israel.'<sup>92</sup> This assertion was repudiated by the Carter Administration. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman David Jones argued that if the Saudis wanted an offensive weapons system they would have purchased the F-16, which was much better suited for ground-attack purposes than the F-15.<sup>93</sup>

The pressure had results, and on 10 May 1978, Harold Brown promised to severely limit the offensive capabilities of the F-15s for Saudi Arabia by not supplying multiple-ejection bomb-racks and missile equipment (thereby inhibiting the plane's ground-attack capabilities), or external fuel tanks (which decreased its operating range).<sup>94</sup> He also assured that the aircraft would only be used defensively and not be based within

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<sup>91</sup> The General Accounting Office argued that 'the military justification for the sale is inadequate, but that political factors outweigh this consideration.' See memorandum (secret), Madeleine Albright to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, March 25, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, "NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 1-4/78" folder.

<sup>92</sup> Statement Morris J. Amitay, *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia*, p. 104.

<sup>93</sup> Letter (executive), Harold Brown to John Sparkman and Clem Zablocki, May 10, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO 134 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>94</sup> In June 1980, the administration told the Saudis that they would consider favourably on Saudi requests for aerial tankers and external fuel tanks in 1981. See memorandum (top secret), Gary Sick to Dr. Brzezinski, June 10, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80-6/80" folder; memorandum (confidential), Carl R. Smith to Les Denend and Peter Tarnoff, June 16, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80-6/80" folder; and memorandum (secret), Madeleine Albright to David Aaron, June 21, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 2, "NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 6-10/80" folder. Ronald Reagan completed the sale in 1981, when he, in addition to five AWACS, sold Saudi Arabia 1,177 Sidewinder air-to-air missile, six aerial refueling tankers and long-range auxiliary fuel tanks for the F-15s. See Andrew Pierre "Arms Sales: The New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 1981-2, p. 278.

striking distance of Israel at the Tabuk Air Base.<sup>95</sup> The assurances made it possible for Israel-friendly senators to support the Saudi sale and still maintain that the package enhanced Israel's security. Without these assurances, it is unlikely that the proposal would have passed Congress. As was the case with the AWACS sale, Carter had to be pressured by Congress before he reduced the sophistication of the arms for export. On May 11, 1978, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 8-to-8 on the package and sent the issue to the Senate floor without any recommendations. After a ten-hour debate on May 15, the Senate approved the aircraft package by a 54-44 vote.<sup>96</sup>

Arms packages as large as the aircraft deal were clearly not compatible with the objective of staying below a dollar ceiling on arms transfers. Fiscal year 1978 was the first year of the ceiling, which had been set at \$8.54 billion. Because it would have been a major embarrassment, and have severely weakened the credibility of the restraint policy to break the first ceiling, the decision on the \$4.8 billion arms package forced the Carter Administration to use some creative accounting procedures in order to be seen as staying within the limits. By postponing the signing of parts of the contracts, only \$2.2 billion of the sales were accounted for in fiscal year 1978, with the remainder spread over the years 1979 and 1980.<sup>97</sup>

In this instance, then, the ceiling seems to have been a symbol for public consumption more than an actual instrument for limiting arms transfers. If Carter had been serious about the ceiling, he would have included the whole package under 1978, the year the transfer agreements were made, and he would have taken the consequences by restricting transfers to other countries. Because Washington had arms transfer commitments to a host of countries this would not have been easy and was never discussed as an option. The aircraft package showed the weakness of control 1 of PD-13, and contributed to the abandoning of the ceiling policy after only two years.

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<sup>95</sup> Letter (executive), Harold Brown to John Sparkman and Clem Zablocki, May 10, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO 134 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>96</sup> Ghassan Bishara, "The Middle East Arms Package: A Survey of the Congressional Debates," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1978, p. 70

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 6, "Armacost Chron File 3/10-21/78" folder.

Control 2 was also affected by the aircraft package. This stated that the U.S.A. would 'not be the first supplier to introduce into a region a weapons system which creates a new or significantly higher combat capability.'<sup>98</sup> Administration officials argued that the aircraft package did not break this control because countries in the region had ordered and were about to receive jet fighters with capabilities similar to those of the F-5, F-15, and F-16.<sup>99</sup> The planes they were referring to were Soviet MiG-23, MiG-25, and SU-20, and French Mirage F-1.<sup>100</sup> In addition to the planes on order, State Department official Lucy Benson compared the F-15 with the fighters in the Iraqi inventory, arguing that because of these Iraqi planes, the F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia did not break control 2 of PD-13.<sup>101</sup> This was a broad definition of what constituted a comparable weapons system. These planes could be compared in sophistication with the F-5, and possibly the F-16, but at that time the F-15 was by far the world's most advanced jet fighter.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, the Carter Administration could argue, with some legitimacy, that they were not breaking control 2, because PD-13 did not define what constituted a 'significantly higher combat capability.'<sup>103</sup>

What is clear in the instance of the aircraft package is that arms-control concerns were outweighed by other foreign-policy considerations. The sales broke with the "spirit" of the arms transfer policy, and went against the Carter's pledge that he would use arms transfers only as an 'exceptional foreign policy implement, to be used only in instances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfer contributes to our national security interests.'<sup>104</sup> In the official announcement of the arms transfer policy, Carter had stated that 'in the future the burden of persuasion will be on those who favor a particular sale rather than on those who oppose it,'<sup>105</sup> and this time, the burden was certainly on the President. This was one of the largest and most controversial arms transfer deals in U.S. history. It reduced the belief – among members of Congress, the public and possible bilateral negotiating partners for

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<sup>98</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>99</sup> Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*, Ipswich, 1995, p. 174.

<sup>100</sup> Kearns, *Arms for the Poor: President Carter's Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*, Canberra, 1980, p. 58.

<sup>101</sup> *Proposed Aircraft Sales to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia*, p. 88.

<sup>102</sup> Tom Gervasi, *The Arsenal of Democracy: American Weapons Available for Export*, New York, 1977, p. 86.

<sup>103</sup> PD-13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>104</sup> Official Announcement by the President of the Arms Transfer Policy, May 19, 1977, *Public Papers of the President*, p. 931.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

international arms transfer reductions – that Carter was serious in seeking to reduce U.S. arms sales.

## **Arms as bargaining chips in peace negotiations**

Carter repeatedly used what Hartung calls 'arms as icebreakers and dealmakers,'<sup>106</sup> in his quest for a peace settlement in the Middle East. The policy of supplying Israel with military equipment to get it involved in peace negotiations and to compromise on territory was not an innovation of the Carter Administration. After the 1975 Sinai II disengagement accords between Egypt and Israel in 1975, the Ford Administration had offered Israel \$1.5 billion in military grants, including F-16s, in return for Israeli withdrawals in the Sinai Desert.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, no previous administrations had used arms transfers as bargaining chips in peace negotiations to the same extent as did Carter.

Carter's main justification for the aircraft package was that it would help to support peace negotiations. It was the most visible and most controversial of his administration's arms sales made in the name of peace, but it was certainly not the only one. On September 17, 1978, after intense negotiations at Camp David, Egypt and Israel signed an agreement on a framework for peace, and the two countries were promised large arms packages. In the agreement, the two sides pledged to reach a peace treaty within three months. However, this time limit was not met. Only after personal intervention by President Carter and further promises of arms supplies – referred to internally in the administration as "peace packages" – was a peace agreement signed in the White House on March 26, 1979. Israel was provided with \$800 million in direct grants for construction of two air bases in the Negev Desert in compensation for those being relinquished in the Sinai, and \$2.2 billion in military credits for purchase of weapons and defense services.<sup>108</sup> The arms package for Israel included armored personnel carriers, artillery weapons, M60A3 tanks, Sidewinder anti-aircraft missiles, M-109 howitzers, and Maverick anti-tank missiles.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the number of F-16 aircraft decided on as part of the Middle East aircraft package was

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<sup>106</sup> William D. Hartung "Why Sell Arms? Lessons from the Carter Years," *World Policy Journal* Vol. 10, No. 1, 1993, p. 61.

<sup>107</sup> See letter (executive), Benjamin Rosenthal et al. to the President, March 10, 1978, JCL, WHCF, FO-23, "FO 3-2 3/1/78-3/31/78" folder; and Thomas R. Wheelock, "Arms for Israel: The Limit of Leverage," *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 128.

<sup>108</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Thomas P. O'Neill, April 9, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-28, "FO 3-2 4/9/79-4/30/79" folder.

<sup>109</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 137; and Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, p. 144.



increased from 80 to 130.<sup>110</sup> Egypt was provided with \$1.5 billion in military credit, for the purchase of F-4 Phantom jets, Hawk air-defense systems, Sidewinder anti-aircraft and Sparrow air-to-air missiles and armored personnel carriers.<sup>111</sup>

According to Carter, these military assistance programs would 'clearly demonstrate to the people of these two countries – more than words alone – that we will help them reap the advantages of peace.'<sup>112</sup> Because Egypt lost its major financial contributor for its arms purchases when Sadat engaged himself in peace talks with Israel, and because of the importance Egyptian authorities placed on U.S. security guarantees, it is unlikely that Sadat would have signed an Egyptian–Israeli peace agreement, had there been no U.S. promises of arms supplies. In addition, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin needed to be induced by promises of future arms deliveries. Therefore, arms transfer restraint to Israel and Egypt was not compatible with the objective of developing a peace agreement between the two countries. Carter had deep personal interests in peace in the Middle East; moreover, by 1979, he was heavily criticized in Washington for being weak in foreign policy. He would not risk a failure to achieve peace between Israel and Egypt. Under such circumstances, the policy of restraint in arms transfers was simply not one of Carter's prime concerns.

## **Secretary Brown's arms sale trip**

Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's Middle East tour in 1979 serves as an instructive example of how events in the region influenced the Carter Administration's arms transfer policy.<sup>113</sup> As a result of the fall of the Shah of Iran in January, several planned arms transfers were cancelled. The new Iranian government cancelled most of the U.S. arms on order, and, with the radicalization of the revolution, Washington annulled the rest. Thus, the U.S.A. suddenly had no customer for \$8–10 billion of arms under production, as well as having lost its largest and most profitable weapon customer.<sup>114</sup> The Carter Administration compensated for this by transferring arms to the Middle East for commercial reasons – not only strategic or political ones. Several

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<sup>110</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 137.

<sup>111</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Cyrus Vance to the President, July 14, 1979, JCL, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50–68, "Presidential Determinations 8/79–5/80" folder; and "Egypt Reported to Say U.S. Will Sell it any Arms," *The New York Times*, February 22, 1980, p. 8.

<sup>112</sup> Letter (executive), Jimmy Carter to Thomas P. O'Neill, April 9, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-28, "FO 3-2 4/9/79–4/30/79" folder.

<sup>113</sup> For comprehensive treatments of Brown's sales trip to the Middle East see Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, pp. 128–142; and Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, pp. 145–149.

<sup>114</sup> Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, p. 128.

large arms transfer agreements in early 1979 were clearly driven by commercial motives.

With the fall of the Shah, the ceiling guideline in PD-13 lost all meaning. It was no longer a challenge for the administration to stay below the ceiling. On the contrary, it became an objective to reach the fiscal year 1979 ceiling, set at \$8.43 billion. To succeed in this objective, Washington needed to find new customers for the arms originally produced for Iran, as well as finding long-term customers for future arms sales. Because of the quantity and sophistication of the arms ordered by Iran, potential recipients were few. In the Middle East, however, there were already large customers of U.S. arms who were eligible for the purchase of the kind of weapons the administration was trying to sell.

And so it came about that, from February 9 to 19 that year, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown went on a weapon-selling tour in the Middle East together with Defense Security Assistance Agency official Ernest Graves, who was responsible for Pentagon's arms-export programs. Arms-transfer negotiations topped the agenda for discussions in all the countries they visited.<sup>115</sup> The trip was successful, and Brown managed to find customers for Iran's outstanding orders and new long-term customers. In addition to agreeing on new arms sales to Morocco, Oman, the Sudan, and Tunisia, Brown increased and accelerated arms agreements with Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>116</sup> Egypt and Saudi Arabia thereby replaced Iran as the major recipients of U.S. arms.

These sales present yet another indication that the restraint policy never played a role in the Middle East. Some of the major transfer decisions made in 1977 and 1978 had been initiated by previous administrations. They were not reassessed, but justified by Carter on the grounds that refusals would damage bilateral relations. The sales negotiated by Brown in 1979 were first-time requests, and the initiative was Carter's. When Carter decided favorably on these requests, it was because of the commercial motivations already mentioned, and because the fall of the Shah had made it strategically important to ensure U.S. influence in other countries in the Middle East and Red Sea region. This the Carter Administration did mainly by promises of increased arms supplies.

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<sup>115</sup> Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, p. 136.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128–129.

## Conclusion

U.S. arms transfer agreements to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia totaled \$2.4 billion in fiscal year 1977, and increased to \$7.2 billion in 1980.<sup>117</sup> This growth can be partly explained by Carter's attempt to improve relations between Israel and the most moderate Arab countries, but the main reason was the U.S. rupture with Iran. The conditions for implementing PD-13 in the Middle East were never present.

Carter implemented PD-13 only to countries and regions of little strategic importance to the U.S.A. – and the Middle East was one of the most strategically important regions in the world. Moreover, other foreign-policy objectives – peace negotiations, enhancing Israel's military security, improving relations with the oil-exporting countries, expanding security relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and supporting friendly governments in the superpower competition – were not deemed compatible with reductions in arms transfers.

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<sup>117</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 8.

## Chapter 9

# The Yemen Arab Republic

## Background

The Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen)<sup>1</sup> was one of the few countries to which both the United States and the Soviet Union supplied military material in the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> In the period 1974–78, North Yemen received \$50 million worth of arms from each of the two superpowers. The third major arms-supplier was France, which sold North Yemen \$40 million worth of arms in the same period.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the Marxist-oriented People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) received more than 95 percent of its arms imports from the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

In the early 1970s, the relationship between the U.S.A. and North Yemen improved, and in 1976, the Ford Administration decided to help strengthen the North Yemeni military forces by supplying it with military equipment financed by Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup> Through this triangular arrangement, the North Yemenis would receive \$140 million worth of U.S.-produced military equipment.<sup>6</sup> This consisted mainly of arms for the ground forces – ground-to-air missile systems, howitzers, engineering equipment, trucks and jeeps – and did not include sophisticated weapons systems.<sup>7</sup> In addition, from 1976, the United States annually granted North Yemen from \$200,000 to \$600,000 worth of military education and training.<sup>8</sup> Carter continued both the arms sales program and the military education grants.

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<sup>1</sup> For simplification and readability, the Yemen Arab Republic will in this chapter be referred to as North Yemen, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen as South Yemen.

<sup>2</sup> Other countries to which both the superpowers supplied arms simultaneously were Finland, India, Morocco, Peru, and Yugoslavia. See U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1968 – 1977, Washington D.C. 1979, pp. 155–158.

<sup>3</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT* 1969–1978, p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation. American–Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington D.C., 1985, p. 722.

<sup>6</sup> Pat Towell, "Carter Mideast Arms Sales Policies Received Skeptically in Congress," *Congressional Quarterly*, March 3, 1979, p. 386; *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives*, March 12, 1979, Washington D.C., 1979, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Warren Christopher to the President, April 17, 1978, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], White House Central Files [henceforth WHCF], FO-23, "FO 3-2 5/1/78 – 6/30/78" folder.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, p. 58.

The two Yemens were not considered strategically important for the two superpowers during the Cold War, and North Yemen was never a major recipient of U.S. arms. However, in 1979, Jimmy Carter decided to provide North Yemen with \$390 million worth of sophisticated military equipment on an emergency basis. This decision was controversial and caused some criticism in Congress. This chapter will focus on the 1979 arms package and discuss why Carter made this drastic decision.

## **The 1979 presidential emergency waiver**

On 24 June 1978, North Yemeni President Ahmad al-Ghashmi was assassinated.<sup>9</sup> The new President Ali Abdullah Saleh sought to reduce North Yemen's dependence on Saudi Arabia for arms acquisitions and forge a closer relationship with the U.S.A. The new North Yemeni authorities repeatedly requested to purchase sophisticated U.S. weapons systems, such as Northrop F-5E jet fighters, General Dynamics M-60 tanks and armored personnel carriers.<sup>10</sup> Carter looked positively on some of these requests, and, in September 1978, he decided to increase U.S. arms transfers to Sanaa.<sup>11</sup> On February 11, 1979, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, while on a 10-day trip to the Persian Gulf and the Middle East,<sup>12</sup> promised Saudi authorities that his government would furnish North Yemen with M-60 tanks and F-5 fighters.<sup>13</sup> However, before these requests were transmitted to Congress for review, armed conflict broke between the two Yemens.

Relations between North and South Yemen had been strained, with periodic outbreaks of open hostilities, ever since the British pulled out and North Yemen became independent in 1962. In late 1978, the hostilities escalated. On February 23, 1979, regular fighting broke out along the border, and South Yemeni forces moved into the North.

As noted, North Yemen had long sought access to more and better U.S. weapons. It now reported to Washington that, without immediate support in the form of military

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<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghashmi had succeeded Ibrahim al-Hamadi, who was murdered on October 11, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum (secret), Warren Christopher to the President, December 11, 1978, JCL, Plains Files, Subject File, Box 39, "State Department Evening Reports, 12/78" folder.

<sup>11</sup> Letter (executive), Douglas J. Bennet Jr. to Lee Hamilton, April 25, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO175 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>12</sup> The major objective of this trip was to sell arms, and Brown negotiated several arms transfer agreements with Persian Gulf and Middle Eastern countries. See chapter 8.

<sup>13</sup> Letter (executive), Benjamin S. Rosenthal to the President, February 12, 1979, JCL, WHCF, TA-7, "TA 3 1/1/79 - 2/28/79" folder.

equipment, the Southern forces would soon overrun the country. Probably more important than the North Yemeni request for support for ensuing U.S. action was Saudi pressure on the Carter Administration to get the United States involved in the conflict. Saudi Arabia was of immense importance to U.S. security strategy in the Persian Gulf, so when Riyadh expressed concern about a conquest of North Yemen by Soviet-friendly South Yemen, and promised to finance arms transfers to North Yemen, Carter accepted the request.

However, it is unlikely that Carter would have acted as he did, had he not perceived the conflict as threatening U.S. security interests because of Soviet actions. North Yemeni and Saudi authorities portrayed the conflict as a coordinated attack by South Yemen aided by a large contingent of Soviet military advisors.<sup>14</sup> Carter and his foreign-policy advisers agreed with this analysis of the conflict; the State Department regional expert, William Crawford, portrayed the events as a Soviet-controlled invasion by the 'Marxist, expansionist, revolutionary regime' of South Yemen.<sup>15</sup>

This assessment was controversial, however. Without clarifying what kind of information the administration's analyses were based on, and probably exaggerating the level of outside interference, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency official Alan Platt stated in a House Hearing: 'our information clearly indicates that Russian, Cuban, and East German advisors are supporting this aggression against the YAR [North Yemen].'<sup>16</sup> Opponents of the transfers protested that U.S. intelligence in the area was too scarce for the administration to confirm the information it received from the Saudis and the Yemenis.<sup>17</sup> The lack of solid U.S. intelligence was confirmed by administration spokesmen. During a House hearing on the issue, officials from the State and Defense Department admitted that, 'where the fighting is, the intelligence is poor,' and that existing evidence on Soviet involvement was 'indirect and circumstantial.'<sup>18</sup> In fact, it has never been fully established which side instigated the armed clashes, whether the Saudis deliberately provided Washington with false information in order to involve the U.S.A., or if the Carter Administration based its decisions on its own intelligence sources. However, most scholars agree that it is

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<sup>14</sup> Carol R. Saivetz, "Superpower Competition in the Middle East and the Collapse of Détente," in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations During the Carter Years*, Oslo, 1997, p. 84.

<sup>15</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25 and 41.

unlikely that the Soviets participated in the conflict either with armed forces or with advisors.<sup>19</sup> South Yemen had been receiving arms from the Soviet Union, and there were Soviet, Cuban and East German advisers in the country. However, there was never any evidence to support the assumption that foreign troops or military advisers were involved in the fighting on the side of South Yemen. It is more likely that the “invasion” of North Yemen was North Yemeni guerrillas assisted by South Yemeni forces engaging in border skirmishes against North Yemeni government forces.

Section 36(b) of the 1976 Arms Export Control Act included a clause permitting the President to export arms during cases of emergency that threatened U.S. national security, without first obtaining Congressional approval.<sup>20</sup> On March 7, 1979, Carter judged that the fighting on the Yemeni border represented an emergency critical to U.S. security and thus necessitating use of the waiver authority. He bypassed Congress and decided to rush \$390 million worth of advanced military equipment to North Yemen.<sup>21</sup> The package included 12 F-5E jet fighter-bombers, 2 C-130 transport aircraft, 64 M-60 tanks, 50 M-113 armored personnel carriers, anti-tank missile systems, howitzers, grenade launchers and ammunition.<sup>22</sup>

This was the first time the emergency clause was used, and this warrants an explanation. The timing of the decision was critical. When the fighting broke out in the Yemens, the Shah had fled from Iran, and it was obvious that Washington had lost all influence in that country. This was most likely a major consideration behind Carter’s decision to apply the emergency waiver. With the loss of Iran, it had become crucial for Washington to ensure that other U.S.-friendly regimes in the region did not collapse or align themselves with the Soviet Union. A united Communist and Soviet-friendly Yemen could have posed a threat to Saudi Arabia, and to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf. Carter and his advisers believed that emergency supplies to North Yemen would help the country survive as an independent state, as well as serve as a demonstration of U.S. readiness to support friendly governments. Carter further demonstrated his general concern for regional stability by moving the aircraft carrier

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<sup>19</sup> For this argument and a comprehensive account of U.S. reactions to the conflict, see Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, pp. 719–726; see also Michael T. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, Austin, TX, 1984, p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> 1976 Arms Export Control Act, Section 36(b).

<sup>21</sup> Scholarly accounts on the value of the arms package vary from \$390 million to \$450 million. However, \$390 million is the amount discussed in the Congressional hearing on the transfer.

<sup>22</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, pp. 1 and 10.

*Constellation* and a flotilla of warships from the Indian Ocean to the Arabian Sea and sending two AWACS to Saudi Arabia.<sup>23</sup>

National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was probably the main architect behind the U.S. response to the conflict between the Yemens. Although there are no publicly available official documents to prove it, Brzezinski's own memoirs point in this direction. Here he explains that the Department of State was 'reluctant' to the emergency airlift of arms to North Yemen and to sending the *Constellation* to the Arabian Sea and AWACS to Saudi Arabia, but that, in a National Security Council meeting chaired by himself and attended by the President, he persuaded Carter that this was the appropriate response.<sup>24</sup> Throughout Carter's presidency, Brzezinski argued for a tough U.S. posture towards any events that suggested Soviet efforts at increasing its influence in Third World countries. As the superpower competition escalated from late 1978, Brzezinski began to talk of an "arc of crisis" ranging from Southwest Asia to Northeast Africa, and expressed these arguments more forcefully.<sup>25</sup> By the time of the Yemen crisis, Brzezinski had gained more power over the administration's foreign policy to the detriment of Cyrus Vance and the Department of State. In a similar internal dispute within the administration in early 1978, Brzezinski had argued for arming Somalia and sending a U.S. carrier task force to the Red Sea in response to Soviet actions in the Horn of Africa (see chapter 1). Carter had disregarded Brzezinski's advice to respond favorably to Somali request for arms in 1977 and 1978, but, with the changed international circumstances, he approved North Yemen's request in 1979. The conflicts in the Horn of Africa and in the Yemens were not identical, but they bore important similarities, and a comparison can be justified. In both conflicts the Soviets were believed to be heavily involved;<sup>26</sup> the conflicts took place in the same geographical area; and internal discussions in the administration over the appropriate U.S. response were similar. Whereas Cyrus Vance and the Department of State, seeking greater accommodation with the Soviet Union, prevailed in the discussions over arms transfers to Somalia in 1977 and 1978, the

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<sup>23</sup> William Crawford said before Congress that the U.S. military buildup in the region would 'serve as testimony of the abiding, very profound interest we have in the security and integrity of the Arabian Peninsula, and particularly Saudi Arabia. See, *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 – 1981*, New York, 1983, p. 447. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance does not even mention the conflict in Yemen in his memoirs, however.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 443–447.

<sup>26</sup> While the Soviets certainly were involved in Ethiopia, it is unlikely that they contributed in the conflict in the Yemens.



more uncompromising views of Brzezinski and his staff carried the day in the case of Yemen in 1979.

The decision was followed by protests from several Congressmen, mainly liberal Democrats. On March 12, the House Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East held an open hearing on the subject. Some representatives protested that the transfer would involve the U.S. in a Third World conflict, and that the administration saw the conflict in an East–West prism while the Yemenis’ major problems were internal.<sup>27</sup> Democratic Representative Les Aspin argued that the transfers could draw the U.S.A. into a situation resembling Vietnam, because ‘the sale of such equipment sucks us into the whirlpool and puts American prestige on the line.’<sup>28</sup> The influential Democratic New York Representative Benjamin Rosenthal drew a parallel to the situation in Iran, and argued that ‘sophisticated arms are not the solution to the ills which beset a feudal kingdom and spark revolution.’<sup>29</sup> The most vocal critic of the sale, Democrat Gerry Studds, believed the transfer had a ‘frighteningly familiar ring’ to the decision to provide Iran with large quantities of sophisticated weaponry shortly before the Shah was removed from power.<sup>30</sup>

Carter’s use of the emergency power was criticized by more legislators than those who were opposed to providing North Yemen with weapons. The major innovation of the 1976 revision of U.S. arms sales regulations was that it provided Congress with greater control over arms exports.<sup>31</sup> Carter had, in connection with several prior arms agreements, been criticized by members of Congress for having made commitments to supply arms to foreign countries ‘and then presenting the Congress with a choice of approving a sale it may oppose or forcing the government to go back on its words.’<sup>32</sup> Such procedures severely reduced Congress’ opportunities to veto a transfer proposal, because a negative vote by Congress at that juncture in the sales process could seriously harm bilateral relations with the requesting country. This criticism was raised by members of Congress during all of Carter’s large arms-transfer decisions, such as the 1977 decision to sell AWACS to Iran and the 1978 decision on the Middle

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<sup>27</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 39–46.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Marc Leepson, “America’s Arms Sales,” *Editorial Research Reports*, Vol. 1, No. 17, 1979, p. 329.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Towell, “Carter Mideast Arms Sales Policies Received Skeptically in Congress,” p. 386.

<sup>30</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>32</sup> Letter (executive), Benjamin S. Rosenthal to the President, February 12, 1979, JCL, WHCF, TA-7, “TA 3 1/1/79 – 2/28/79” folder.

East aircraft package. When Carter in this instance chose to ignore Congressional review procedures totally, it was inevitable that he would be heavily criticized. A letter signed by 13 members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs complained that 'the use of an emergency waiver provision to bypass normal provisions of the Arms Export Control Act was an abuse of presidential discretionary authority.'<sup>33</sup> Opponents complained that the emergency waiver should be used only in 'the most sparring, unique emergency national security situation,' which they did not perceive this situation to be.<sup>34</sup> Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Eastern Affairs William Crawford countered that the White House had 'felt speed to be of essence.' However, he admitted that it was necessary to rush the decision mainly to demonstrate U.S. concern, not because it was need in order for the North to be able to fight back.<sup>35</sup>

The arms package was also criticized because it was unlikely that the North Yemeni forces would be able to absorb and make use of the weapons in the ongoing conflict.<sup>36</sup> The North Yemeni military forces lacked personnel trained to operate either the M-60 tanks or the F-5 aircraft. In addition, the M-60 tank had limited cross-country mobility, and the terrain where the fighting took place was rough. Representative Hamilton noted in the House hearing that there would be a 'traffic jam,' and suggested that 'we ought to provide some traffic lights.'<sup>37</sup> Crawford, who expected it to take two years before the forces of North Yemen forces would be able to operate the tanks and aircraft, acknowledged the problems.<sup>38</sup> As mentioned, the package also included less sophisticated weapons like grenade launchers, anti-tank missiles and small-arms ammunition. These were the only U.S.-supplied weapons that the North's forces could handle instantly, and despite the expedited deliveries, they were the only weapons that ever reached the battlefield.

Because the dollar-value of these weapons fell below the level specified for Congressional notification under the Arms Export Control Act, they could in fact have

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<sup>33</sup> Letter (executive), Les Aspin et al. to the President, April 3, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO175 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder.

<sup>34</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> See letter (executive), Jonathan Bingham to the President, April 4, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO175 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; letter (executive), Les Aspin et al. to the President, April 3, 1979, JCL, WHCF, FO-32, "FO 3-2/CO175 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; and *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

been sent immediately, without use of the presidential emergency waiver. Why then, did not Carter focus on sending these arms – thereby avoiding Congressional criticism while also aiding the North Yemenis? The reason is most likely that the main purpose of the transfer was not to help North Yemen repel the South from its borders. A more important objective for Carter was to send a message to the Soviet Union that the United States had important interests in the region and to allies that it was a reliable partner.<sup>39</sup> Export of unsophisticated artillery weapons would not have communicated that message, so Carter chose to send large, highly modern weapons systems in addition to arms that could have some effect in the fighting.

As noted, the President could use the waiver of Congress' veto right over major arms transfers only if U.S. security was threatened. Administration witnesses at the House hearing struggled to justify the use of the presidential emergency authority, and failed to give a credible explanation for how U.S. security interests were threatened by the conflict between the Yemens. In justifying the decision, they referred to Saudi interests, as when Crawford (in a somewhat intricate way) explained: 'An important friend of the United States [Saudi Arabia], one with which we consider we have vital interests, regarded its vital interests, in turn, challenged by this very new and threatening situation inherent in the seizure and the holding of the territory of its neighbor.'<sup>40</sup> It had long been a U.S. policy objective to make Saudi Arabia a strong regional power. Because Saudi Arabia would finance the arms package, North Yemen would be tied more closely to Riyadh, and the Saudis would gain greater influence in the region.<sup>41</sup>

Confronted with the size of the arms package and the U.S. reaction to the conflict, Crawford stated that the Carter Administration's handling of the matter was not an overreaction, but 'a minimal reaction.'<sup>42</sup> Alan Platt argued in the same manner, when he justified the action as 'a careful, measured response, tailored to the evolution of

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<sup>39</sup> Republican representative Paul Findley, who supported the Administration's policy, noted this symbolism. In the House hearing on the arms package he stated: 'What really counts in this region is the perception, the perception on the part of the Soviet Union, on the part of Saudi Arabia, on the part of all our allies and other countries throughout the world – the perception that the United States has vital interests in this region and is willing to take decisive action with dispatch to represent those interests.' Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> In a similar case in 1977, Carter provided the Sudan with \$188 million worth of F-5E fighter aircraft bankrolled by Saudi Arabia. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, p. 138.

<sup>42</sup> *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 52.

events.<sup>43</sup> However, in hindsight it appears that the situation did not warrant use of the presidential emergency waiver, and that it was an overreaction. Much because many legislators believed Carter had misused the emergency waiver, and because the administration failed in giving a credible explanation of how U.S. security interests were threatened, the Arms Export Control Act was amended in 1979. The amendment reduced the President's flexibility in bypassing Congress on arms-transfer decisions, and said that if the emergency waiver was used, the President should provide 'a detailed justification for his determination, including a description of the emergency circumstances which necessitate the immediate issuance of the letter of offer and a discussion of the national security interests involved.'<sup>44</sup>

The controls in PD-13 were administration guidelines the President could circumvent if he wished to. By contrast, the Arms Export Control Act was a law the President was compelled to abide by. In wishing to show a forceful response to Soviet activities, Carter utilized a loophole in that law, thereby generating criticism that he was using large-scale arms transfers to a Third World country where it was not to the advantage of either the receiving country or the United States. This was not in accordance with what Carter had said less than two years earlier, when he had solemnly declared that, under his leadership, arms transfers would be used only 'as an exceptional foreign policy implement,' and that 'the burden of persuasion will be on those who favor a particular sale, rather than on those who oppose it.'<sup>45</sup> In the case of North Yemen, opponents were not even given the opportunity to voice their disagreement before Carter had made his decision.

Opponents of the arms package proved to be right that there was no need to use the emergency clause if the purpose was to prevent a Southern occupation of North Yemen. After mediation by the Arab League, the fighting ended in mid-March 1979, and South Yemen withdrew its forces. The belligerents signed a cease-fire before most of the U.S. equipment had arrived. All the same, Carter decided that the arms deliveries should take place.<sup>46</sup> This again shows that the main purpose was not to directly influence the outcome of the conflict. Shortly after the end of the armed hostilities, the North Yemeni government, apparently unhappy with the size of the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> 1979 International Security Assistance Act, Public Law 96-92, Section 19(c).

<sup>45</sup> "Statement by the President on Conventional Arms Transfer Policy," May 19, 1977, *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

<sup>46</sup> Leepson, "America's Arms Sales," p. 328.

U.S.-supplied arms package, requested the Soviet Union to sell it \$500 million worth of weapons. Moscow responded favorably and provided Sanaa with sophisticated weapons systems like Mig-21 fighter aircraft and T-54 tanks.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the result was an anomalous and absurd situation where both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. supplied North Yemen with large quantities of military equipment, and both superpowers had military personnel stationed in the country to provide training in their respective weapons systems.

## Conclusion

Although it may be argued that the decision on the arms package to North Yemen broke with the PD-13 guideline specifying that arms transfers would be used as a foreign-policy tool only 'where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfers contribute to our national security interests,'<sup>48</sup> it did not break with the letter of any of the six controls. The use of the emergency waiver, however, was not compatible with the pledges Carter had given during the 1977 election campaign, and thus further demonstrates how the arms transfer restraint policy became watered down.

The central condition for Carter's break with election promises was the revival of containment as Washington's central foreign-policy objective. Following several foreign-policy setbacks, Carter, under the influence of Brzezinski, decided to pursue a more vigorous and decisive policy in the Persian Gulf to shore up Soviet efforts at increasing its influence. The failure to protect the Shah from being overthrown in January had made allies in the region worry about the U.S. willingness to support them in crisis situations. In providing North Yemen with a large arms package, Carter sought to allay such worries. As with most foreign-policy actions, the decision to show assertiveness, and contain Soviet advances on the Arabian Peninsula, also had a domestic dimension. In responding forcefully to the request from North Yemen, Carter sought to disprove rising domestic criticism that he was soft on foreign policy.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 188; and Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, p. 202.

<sup>48</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.

<sup>49</sup> This was also observed by House Democrat Gerry Studds: 'the decisions made at the highest level of this government on the grounds of extreme urgency and national security appear to me to be in large measure, at least a function of domestic political considerations, in the broadest sense, as opposed to the genuine national security military requirements of this country.' *Proposed Arms Transfers to the Yemen Arab Republic*, p. 51.

## Chapter 10

# Somalia

In many of its major arms-transfer decisions, the Carter Administration was tied by inherited commitments to supply friends and allies. Such commitments were difficult to break without causing friction between the country in question and the U.S.A. This influenced decisions on large exports to countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, South Korea, and Israel.

In the case of Somalia, however, there had been no U.S. arms transfer program before 1980, when Carter decided that it would be in the U.S. interest to develop one. This further displays how weak Carter's determination to implement his arms transfer restraint policy was. Not only did he find it difficult to cut back on arms sales to the main importers of U.S. arms, he also initiated new programs and enlarged others (e.g. with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, North Yemen, and Pakistan), thus paving the way for increasing the number of U.S. arms-transfer commitments as well. His successor, Ronald Reagan, brought U.S. arms transfers to new heights during his first two years in power:<sup>1</sup> but many of those sales were based on agreements made by Carter.

Events in the Horn of Africa played an important role in the deterioration of U.S.–Soviet relations during Carter's presidency. The two most prominent countries in the region,<sup>2</sup> Somalia and Ethiopia, were strategically important to the two superpowers because of their location on the borders of the Red Sea and their proximity to the Arabian Peninsula. Throughout Carter's term in office, there was an ongoing discussion within the Executive Branch over appropriate U.S. responses to the hostilities between Somalia and Ethiopia and the increasing Soviet and Cuban involvement on the Ethiopian side in this conflict. The most disputed issue was whether the U.S.A. should supply Somalia with arms.

It is instructive to separate the U.S. arms transfer policy to Somalia during the Carter Administration into two periods: 1977–78 and 1979–80. In the first period, the

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<sup>1</sup> Total U.S. arms transfers increased from \$6.5 billion in 1980 to \$9.3 billion in 1982. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1985, Washington D.C., 1985, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> In the Carter Administration's terminology, the "Horn of Africa" referred to Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, the Sudan and Djibouti, a practice followed in this thesis as well.

administration discussed the option of arming Somalia. However, an arms-sale program never came to fruition because Mogadishu did not meet Washington's conditions. In the second period, the Somalis, despite some compromises, still did not promise to acquiesce to all the requirements from 1977–78. However, the increasing superpower competition for influence in the areas surrounding the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf resulted in Carter trading arms for access to military bases in Somalia.

## **The Horn of Africa prior to the Carter Presidency**

In 1953, the U.S.A. and Ethiopia signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, and Ethiopia became the largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in sub-Saharan Africa. From 1953 to 1977, the U.S.A. provided Emperor Haile Selassie's Ethiopia with \$193 million worth of military equipment.<sup>3</sup> In the first half of the 1970s, Ethiopia received nearly all of the aid going through the U.S. Military Assistance Program and over 50 percent of the aid going through the International Military Education and Training Program for Africa.<sup>4</sup> In return for military assistance, the U.S.A. was given permission to build naval communication facilities at Kagnaw in the northeastern province of Eritrea. Relations started to deteriorate in 1974 when a Marxist-inspired military government overthrew Haile Selassie. There were discussions in Washington over U.S. arms transfers to the military government of Ethiopia during the presidency of Gerald Ford. The Ethiopian government had a long and bad record of human rights abuses against its own population, especially against the Eritreans, but the Ford Administration continued to supply the country with weapons because of its perceived strategic significance. In fact, U.S. military aid to Ethiopia reached new heights in 1975, when the country was granted almost \$15 million worth of U.S. military equipment.<sup>5</sup> However, on February 11, 1977, Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam seized power. Mengistu approached Moscow for political and military support, and U.S.–Ethiopian relations reached a crisis.

The Soviet Union had been Somalia's principal arms supplier since 1963. In the period from 1964 to 1977, Somalia had received \$369 million worth of Soviet arms as

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), *Military Sales—An Increasing U.S. Role in Africa*, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, pp. 41–42; and 59–60.

<sup>5</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, p. 47.

grants,<sup>6</sup> becoming the Soviets' closest ally on the continent after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat renounced Egypt's security relationship with Moscow in 1974. In that year, Moscow and Mogadishu signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, and the Soviets gained access to military communication facilities and basing rights at the port of Berbera. In mid-1976, the Soviet Union and Ethiopia initiated a security relationship and Moscow started supplying Addis Ababa with weapons. The Soviets tried to maintain their close military relationship with Somalia and simultaneously gain influence in Ethiopia, but when this proved impossible in 1977, they chose the latter because of the country's larger size, its Marxist-oriented government and its strategic location.<sup>7</sup> Thus, a client-patron switch in the Horn of Africa was in the making when Carter took office in January 1977.

### **Carter's policy in the Horn of Africa 1977–1978**

During the 1976 presidential election campaign, Carter had declared that he would work to improve relations with African countries. His Africa policy was summed up in the slogan 'African solutions for Africa's problems.'<sup>8</sup> To achieve constructive relationships and help solve some of the continent's problems, Carter promised that his administration would treat African countries as independent states and not merely as pawns in the superpower competition. This was part of Carter's larger goal of extending U.S. foreign policy to include not only the East–West dimension, but a North–South dimension as well.

Carter had strongly advocated applying human rights considerations to U.S. foreign policy. Shortly after taking office, he followed this up by reversing the arms transfer policy for Ethiopia. On February 24, 1977, following Mengistu's coup, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance declared that U.S. military aid to Ethiopia, Argentina and Uruguay would be terminated because of human rights violations.<sup>9</sup> On April 19, all weapons in the pipeline for Ethiopia were halted,<sup>10</sup> and on April 22, Addis Ababa was informed

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<sup>6</sup> ACDA, *WMEAT 1963–1973*, p. 68; and ACDA, *WMEAT 1969–1978*, p. 161.

<sup>7</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York, 1983, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: US Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia 1953–1991*, Pittsburgh, 1991, p. 192.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Muravchik, *The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy*, Lanham, MD, 1986, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Note (confidential), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, April 21, 1977, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "4–5/77" folder.



that the U.S.A. would close down the Kagnev station by September.<sup>11</sup> The Ethiopian government retaliated on April 30 by unilaterally abrogating the 1953 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, and ordering an immediate closure of the military facilities at Kagnev. In June, Congress amended the International Security Assistance Act, and prohibited transfers of military equipment and services to Ethiopia 'unless the President declared that national security interests were at stake.'<sup>12</sup>

Carter took credit for following his proclaimed human rights policy in the decision to terminate the security relationship with Ethiopia. However, the relationship would probably have ended anyhow. U.S.–Ethiopian relations had been deteriorating since 1974, and the Ethiopian government had in mid-1976 taken the first step towards what would be a rearrangement of allies in the Horn by seeking closer relations with the Soviet Union. Moscow had responded positively and had initiated an arms supply program to Addis Ababa. Thus, it seemed inevitable that the U.S.–Ethiopian security relationship would have ended even if Carter had not banned arms transfers.<sup>13</sup> There is no reason to doubt that human rights considerations contributed to his decision to halt arms transfers to Ethiopia, but geopolitical considerations were probably more important. As we shall see, the U.S.A. was at that time moving toward a closer relationship with Somalia, and Carter and his foreign policy advisers would probably have considered it difficult to maintain security relations with both Somalia and Ethiopia.

Strengthening this argument is Carter's record on applying human rights considerations to his arms transfer policy. No other government outside Latin America experienced a total cut-off of U.S. armaments because of violations of human rights, although several governments receiving U.S. arms had human rights records just as bad as those of Argentina and Uruguay. There is therefore no reason to believe that Carter would have punished a government in the strategically important Horn of Africa with arms sanctions, had he believed that continued arms shipments could serve U.S. security interests.

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<sup>11</sup> The decision to terminate the use of the Kagnev station had been taken already in March. See, Presidential Review Memorandum 21 (secret), March 17, 1977, JCL, Vertical File, Presidential Review Memoranda, "Presidential Review Memoranda 11-35" folder.

<sup>12</sup> Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, p. 153.

<sup>13</sup> For this argumentation, see Larry C. Napper, "The Ogaden War: Some Implications for Crisis Prevention," in Alexander L. George, ed., *Managing U.S.–Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention*, Boulder, CO, pp. 245. Napper says that 'there is much evidence to suggest that disagreement over human rights and arms supplies were symptoms rather than the root of conflict between Ethiopia and the United States.'

In July 1977, Mengistu sent troops into the contested Ogaden region, which was inhabited mainly by people of Somali origin,<sup>14</sup> in support of Western Somali Liberation Front guerillas. Shortly after the outbreak of the conflict, the Soviet Union initiated a large-scale arms shipment program for its new ally in the Horn. During the Ogaden War from 1977 to 1978, Moscow supplied Addis Ababa with approximately \$1 billion worth of military equipment.<sup>15</sup> In November 1977, Cuba sent 17,000 troops and several hundred military advisers to Ethiopia to assist in the war.<sup>16</sup> The First Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Army, Vasily I. Petrov, led the Ethiopian campaign.<sup>17</sup> On October 19 that year, Moscow cancelled all weapons shipments to Somalia. Less than one month later, the Somali president Muhammed Siad Barre ended the 1974 Soviet–Somali Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, withdrawing Soviet military base rights and expelling all Soviet military advisers.<sup>18</sup>

### **U.S. arms transfer policy during the Ogaden War, 1977–78**

In early 1977, there was a confluence of U.S. and Somali interests. From March that year, the Carter Administration actively tried to decrease Soviet and enhance U.S. influence in Somalia. The Somalis were receptive to the overtures because of their need for superpower support. As the Somali Ambassador to the United States explained to Vice President Walter Mondale, 'only the U.S. can help Somalia in dealing with the Soviet Union.'<sup>19</sup> However, the White House had not decided how it would seek to gain increased influence with the Somalis, and the 'crucial policy question' was whether to 'provide some military assistance to Somali [sic].'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Ogaden was called "Western Somalia" by Somali officials.

<sup>15</sup> Stephanie Neuman, *Military Assistance in Recent Wars: The Dominance of the Superpowers*, Washington D.C., 1986, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> The number of Cubans involved in the Ogaden conflict is disputed. See for example Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, p. 177, who says that there were 17,000 Cubans on the side of the Ethiopians; and Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation. American–Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Washington, D.C., p. 704, who says there were 15,000 Cuban forces fighting in the Ogaden.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum (secret), Walter Mondale to the President, May 12, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "4–5/77" folder.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum (secret), Walter Mondale to the President, May 13, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "4–5/77" folder.

Somalia's first request for the purchase of U.S. arms came in June 1977.<sup>21</sup> After extensive discussions within the administration, Vance informed the Somalis on July 25 that although the administration had not reached a final decision, it was prepared in principle to offer a modest amount of defensive military equipment.<sup>22</sup> The Somalis shortly thereafter presented an extensive shopping list of desired arms. However, only a week after Vance's announcement, the White House learned that regular Somali forces were involved in the fighting in the Ogaden. The arms offer was cancelled and Barre was told that the U.S.A. would not consider his arms requests as long as Somali troops were engaged in the Ogaden conflict.<sup>23</sup> While the Somali incursion into Ethiopia was an important reason for this policy change, there were also other events that contributed to the decision. By August, it had become obvious that the Soviets would not succeed in their effort to ride the Ethiopian and Somali horses at the same time. To gain the desired influence in Ethiopia they would have to cut off arms supplies to Mogadishu. The main objective in Washington's efforts to improve its relations with the Somali government had been to reduce Soviet influence in the country.<sup>24</sup> When it became clear that the Soviets would lose their influence in Somalia even without U.S. arms transfers to Mogadishu, the Carter Administration sought to disengage the U.S.A. from active participation in the Horn by not supplying any of the warring parties. Instead, it advocated mediation through the Organization for African Unity (OAU), and called for Soviet restraint. In the new situation, arming the Somalis, who were clearly the aggressors, would have exposed Carter to political risks at home and abroad. The arms transfer restraint policy was not the dominant factor behind the decision: restraint coincided with other objectives. By taking a passive line, Carter sought to discredit Moscow and keep all options open regarding possible future cooperation with both of the major countries in the Horn.<sup>25</sup> Arms

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<sup>21</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Cyrus Vance to the President, February 25, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 8/79-5/80" folder.

<sup>22</sup> Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, p. 175.

<sup>23</sup> Note (confidential), Paul Henze to William Hyland, August 10, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "8-9/77" folder.

<sup>24</sup> In May 1977 Somali Ambassador to the United States Addou said to Vice President Walter Mondale that 'military assistance from the U.S. definitely would lead Somalia to reduce the Soviet presence,' and make Somalia 'end its military arrangements with the Soviet Union.' Memorandum (secret), Walter Mondale to the President, May 12, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "4-5/77" folder.

<sup>25</sup> Brzezinski summed up this position in a memorandum to the President in August 1977. 'We want to enhance our longer range chances for increasing our influence in both Ethiopia and Somalia and do what we can to ensure that the Soviets gain as little as possible—or, in fact, lose—from their involvement.' Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, undated, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "8-9/77" folder.

transfers to Somalia were not believed to advance U.S. foreign policy interests, and all transfers were withheld. However, because the White House did not want Somalia to return to the Soviet sphere of influence, and because it wanted to impede Soviet policy in Ethiopia, it encouraged regional allies and associates, especially Saudi Arabia, to provide the Barre regime with military equipment.<sup>26</sup> However, the region's suppliers of arms to Somalia were told not to transfer any arms of U.S. origin, because this would link the Carter Administration with Somali actions.<sup>27</sup> This demonstrates Carter's pragmatic approach to arms transfers, in contradiction with the idealistic policy he had advocated in the 1976 election campaign.

While Carter changed his mind on supplying Somalia with military equipment, it is probable that U.S. efforts to improve relations with Somalia and the announcement that it was willing "in principle" to send weapons was an important factor behind President Barre's decision to send regular forces into the Ogaden. It is likely that he perceived the Carter Administration's policy as a sign that the U.S.A. would support it if Ethiopia, with the help of Soviet and Cuban forces, should cross the border and carry the fighting into Somali territory.<sup>28</sup> Paul Henze, National Security Council specialist on the Horn of Africa, who was against arming Somalia throughout the whole period,<sup>29</sup> had warned already in May that this could be the result if the U.S.A. offered Somalia arms.<sup>30</sup> In December, he told Brzezinski: 'the Somalis exploited our willingness to consider supplying them with defensive weapons to justify their invasion of the Ogaden.'<sup>31</sup> Henze summed up what was the prevailing, though not publicly spoken, attitude toward Somalia within the Carter Administration, from the time of the Somali attack against Ethiopia until its withdrawal in March 1978:

*The Somalis are the aggressors. Their attack on Ethiopia brought the Soviets and Cubans to its defense in a massive way. They are not attractive as objects of sustained*

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<sup>26</sup> See Special Coordination Committee, February 22, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 11, "Ethiopia-Somalia, 4/77-2/22/78" folder.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> For this argumentation see Napper, "The Ogaden War," p. 245; and Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, p. 710.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Henze used strong expressions to characterize the Barre regime. In March 1978, he told NSC official Samuel Huntington that the Somali government's 'nationalism is one of the most virulent and irrational in the world today. It can be compared to the kind of irrationalism and nationalism that infected Germany under Hitler – and it is leading to the same sad result for the very people whose interests it is supposedly intended to serve.' Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Samuel Huntington, March 8, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, "3/78" folder.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, May 14, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "4-5/77" folder.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 9, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "12/77" folder.

*campaign sympathy: they brought the Soviets in the first place, they committed bald aggression, they have lied and schemed; Siad's "socialist" system is illiberal and has been repressive. These are not the kind of people the U.S. public can identify with for long.*<sup>32</sup>

As a result of the introduction of Cuban forces and Soviet arms and advisers into Ethiopia, Somalia lost terrain and suffered great losses in manpower and military equipment. Barre repeatedly requested U.S. arms. Despite the Soviet and Cuban involvement in the conflict, the White House still answered that it would not supply Somalia with arms before Somalia had withdrawn all its forces from Ethiopian territory. In early 1978, Barre started a phased withdrawal, and by March 15, the Somali army had retreated from the Ogaden. The retreat was not a consequence of U.S. refusal to provide Somalia with arms, but a result of Ethiopian counter-attacks.<sup>33</sup> When Somalia began to lose territory, countries like Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Iran, alarmed by Soviet activities around the Persian Gulf, called for greater U.S. involvement in the Horn.<sup>34</sup> Although these calls from regional friends were probably not as decisive for the Carter Administration's decision-making on the Horn as they were in the decision to supply North Yemen with arms in March 1979, this was certainly an important factor. Especially Brzezinski, but also others in the National Security Council staff, were sensitive to what they saw as a loss of confidence in U.S. willingness to contain Soviet influence in the region. Samuel Huntington, who was responsible for national security planning in the NSC, told Brzezinski in March 1978 that there was a 'crisis of confidence with respect to Administration policy in the Horn [...] among our friends in the area, particularly Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iran, and Kenya.'<sup>35</sup> In addition, NSC press officer Jerrold Schecter reported that more and more members of Congress 'expressed frustration over [the Administration's] seeming inability to counter the Russians.'<sup>36</sup> Despite increased pressure, Carter and most of his foreign policy advisers were still opposed to providing Somalia with weapons.

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<sup>32</sup> Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, January 21, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, "1/78" folder.

<sup>33</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Cyrus Vance to the President, February 25, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 8/79-5/80" folder.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, January 12, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "1/78" folder.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum (secret), Samuel Huntington to Zbigniew Brzezinski, March 7, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, "3/78" folder.

<sup>36</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jerry Schecter to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, February 21, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Press and Congressional Relations, Box 1, "NSC Weekly Legislative Reports 1-4/78" folder.

The guideline in PD-13 with the most relevance to the Carter Administration's policy in the Horn of Africa was control 5, which constrained re-transfer of U.S.-origin weapons by third parties. Carter was aware that Saudi Arabia had been providing Somalia with American weapons without U.S. consent and in violation of bilateral arms transfer contracts.<sup>37</sup> There were also reports of Iran and Egypt arming Somalia with American arms, and Israel providing Ethiopia with cluster bombs of U.S. origin.<sup>38</sup> In fact, when Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard Moose discussed possible arms supplies with Barre in March 1978, Barre told him that the Somali army could easily absorb and use all kinds of U.S.-origin military equipment, because he had been supplied with large quantities through third-country transfers – although he did not specify which countries.<sup>39</sup> There is no available evidence to indicate that these transfers were encouraged by the Carter Administration. However, for control 5 to be effective there had to be some sort of sanctions against countries which re-transferred U.S.-origin equipment without U.S. consent. Even though the White House had evidence that Saudi Arabia had supplied U.S.-made weapons to Somalia (evidence in the form of serial numbers on arms taken from Somali troops by Ethiopians), they were not punished. The U.S.A. had never sold Saudi Arabia as much armaments as it did during Carter's presidency.

## **U.S. arms transfer policy to Somalia 1979–1980**

Several events converged to make Carter change his mind again about arming Somalia. One important factor was that his foreign policy was beginning to be seen as indecisive and weak in many policy circles in Washington, and there were calls for countering what was perceived to be Cuban-Soviet expansionist policy in Africa. Although domestic pressure was a consideration, the primary factor was international events, most of which are mentioned earlier in this thesis. These events resulted in a

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<sup>37</sup> See Special Coordination Committee, February 22, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 11, "Ethiopia-Somalia, 4/77-2/22/78" folder; and Presidential Directive 32 (secret), February 24, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 21-40" folder.

<sup>38</sup> See Special Coordination Committee, February 22, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 11, "Ethiopia-Somalia, 4/77-2/22/78" folder; and Presidential Directive 32 (secret), February 24, 1978, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 21-40" folder; Letter (executive), Paul N. McCloskey to Jimmy Carter, April 10, 1978, JCL, White House Central Files, FO-30, "FO 3-2/CO 74, 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder; Max Holland, "A bleak future for arms restraint," in *Congressional Record – Senate*, 9 July 1979, p. 8939; and "Eritreans Report Cluster-Bomb Toll," *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, March 27, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, "3/78" folder.

serious deterioration of U.S.–Soviet relations and a further globalization of the Cold War.

In mid-1979, as a result of a tense international environment, and especially because of the fall of the Shah in Iran, the Carter Administration began developing a new Persian Gulf Security Framework, with the objective of expanding U.S. military presence in the area. The new strategy involved improving the forward defense posture through a rapid deployment force in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.<sup>40</sup> The strategy was proclaimed publicly in Carter's State of the Union Address on January 23, 1980. In the passage which would soon be dubbed the Carter Doctrine, the President said: 'an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'<sup>41</sup> For this containment strategy to be effective and have a deterrent effect on the Soviets, the U.S. Air Force and Navy would need to strengthen their overseas military bases for forward deployment of forces for peacetime presence and crisis response. This applied especially to the bases at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and various sites in the Mediterranean. They would also have to acquire access to new bases, especially in proximity to the Arabian Sea. In June 1980, the Carter Administration completed negotiations, which had started in November 1979, on arms-for-base-access to naval and air facilities in Oman and Kenya, in return for military assistance worth \$100 million to Oman and \$60 million to Kenya. However, the real prize in the area was the former Soviet military base at Berbera in Somalia. This base was of particular interest because of its strategic location and its airfield, large enough to be used for long-range transport aircraft and bombers.<sup>42</sup> Part of Carter's Persian Gulf Security strategy, as spelled out in Presidential Directive 63 of January 15, 1981, involved building up the military forces of regional allies, in order 'to deter and diminish internal and external threats to stability; and to contribute to deterring and resisting Soviet penetration – political, economic, or military.'<sup>43</sup> Thus, by 1980, Carter had decided to make active use of increased arms transfers to governments around the Persian Gulf in order to advance U.S. security interests.

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<sup>40</sup> Presidential Directive 63 (secret), January 15, 1981, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 41-63" folder.

<sup>41</sup> "State of the Union 1980," *From Revolution to Reconstruction* [online]. Available from: <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/jc39/speeches/su80jec.htm> [accessed 18 December 2003]

<sup>42</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 260.

<sup>43</sup> Presidential Directive 63 (secret), January 15, 1981, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 41-63" folder.

Whether or not to supply Somalia with military equipment was intensely debated within the administration from March 1977, when the security relationship with Ethiopia collapsed. The differences were especially sharp between the Department of State and the staff of the National Security Council (NSC), and several newspapers reported tense discussions between Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>44</sup>

Brzezinski believed the administration had taken too passive a line in dealing with Soviet actions in the Horn, and repeatedly 'expressed his concern at the consequences both domestically and abroad of doing nothing.'<sup>45</sup> This concern gained momentum in early 1978 when the Ethiopian and Cuban forces were on the offensive. Brzezinski believed that, if the Soviet-sponsored Cuban and Ethiopian forces crossed the border, they would bring down Barre and establish a Soviet-friendly government. To prevent such a development, he proposed moving an aircraft-carrier task force into the area to 'send a strong message to the Soviets' not to let the Ethiopians cross the border, and supply Somalia with arms.<sup>46</sup> At this stage, Brzezinski was opposed not only by Vance but also by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and President Carter himself, who believed that such measures would destroy the prospects of improving relations with Ethiopia.<sup>47</sup>

Vance, on the other hand, advocated the policy promoted by Carter during the election campaign, which was to deal with African 'problems in the local context in which they had their roots,'<sup>48</sup> and from mid-1977 to late 1979 there was consensus in the Department of State that the U.S.A. should not supply Somalia with arms.<sup>49</sup> Officials in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) also opposed arming Somalia. The official responsible for security assistance in ACDA, Norman Clyne, noted that in contrast to the U.S. arming of North Yemen in March 1979, supplying Somalia with weapons 'would reward aggression.'<sup>50</sup> Although Barre withdrew Somali

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<sup>44</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 84.

<sup>45</sup> Special Coordination Committee, February 22, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 11, "Ethiopia-Somalia, 4/77-2/22/78" folder.

<sup>46</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977 - 1981*, New York, 1983, p. 182.

<sup>47</sup> Special Coordination Committee, February 22, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 11, "Ethiopia-Somalia, 4/77-2/22/78" folder; and Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 182-83.

<sup>48</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 84.

<sup>49</sup> Note (confidential), Paul Henze to William Hyland, August 10, 1977, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 1, "8-9/77" folder.

<sup>50</sup> Memorandum (executive), Norman Clyne to Christine Dodson, May 16, 1979, JCL, White House Central Files, FG-209, "FG 264 1/1/79-5/31/79" folder.



forces from the Ogaden in March 1978, it was obvious that he had not given up his irredentist claims against Somalia's neighbors. Mogadishu controlled the main Somali insurgency groups and supplied them with weapons also after regular forces withdrew; and in November 1979, Somali forces were again sent to the Ogaden.<sup>51</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979 silenced most of the opposition to exchanging access to military facilities in Somalia for arms to the Barre government.<sup>52</sup> Also Vance and the ACDA staff now changed their minds, and recommended that Carter supply Somalia with military equipment.<sup>53</sup> Vance told Carter that the decision would help maintain a 'pro-Western government in Somalia,' and facilitate 'negotiations leading to Somali agreement for extended US access to Somali military facilities.'<sup>54</sup>

In March 1980, Carter sent Congress a Presidential Determination on supplying Somalia military equipment and services. In justifying the decision, he said that the supplies would 'strengthen a number of United States security interests in the region' because of Somalia's strategic location 'at the entrance of Bab el-Mandeb Straits

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<sup>51</sup> Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, October 24, 1979, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 4, "9-10/79" folder; and Cable (secret), Warren Christopher to Embassy Mogadishu, July 2, 1980, Donated Historical Materials, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 7/80-9/80" folder.

<sup>52</sup> The only official who still advocated strongly against supplying Somalia with weapons was the Horn of Africa specialist in the NSC, Paul Henze. In a memorandum to Brzezinski in December 1980 he concluded that 'we turn over to the Reagan Administration a Horn situation which is considerably worse than the one we inherited four years ago. This Administration has compromised its own principles to try to secure a position in Somalia and has gained nothing. Added to this we wished to improve our own security situation though there was never much agreement within this Administration on exactly how this should be done. Nevertheless, as a result of a sequence of events that is still mysterious to me, the President, reversing his own policy, soon afterward decided that we should seek military facilities in Somalia and offer military aid in return. This was an unwise decision and everyone in this government with significant experience of the Horn knew could not produce a satisfactory result.' Memorandum (secret), Paul Henze to Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 10, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 5, "10-12/80" folder. Former Senator of Indiana, Vance Hartker, who advocated supplying Somalia weapons, accused Henze for having a conflict of interests because of Henze's longtime interest in Ethiopia which had among other things resulted in a travel book on Ethiopia. Letter (executive), February 26, 1979, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Horn/Special, Box 2, "3/79" folder.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, February 29, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 8/79-5/80" folder.

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Cyrus Vance to the President, February 25, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 8/79-5/80" folder.

which is a major access route to petroleum supplies for Western Europe and Israel.<sup>55</sup> However, he did not mention the main reason for the policy change – the objective of assuring U.S. military basing rights in Somalia. In the summer of 1980, after lengthy internal discussions, the administration reached a conclusion. The final arms for access-to-bases agreement between Washington and Mogadishu, signed on August 22, 1980, stipulated that the U.S.A. would provide Somalia with \$40 million in security assistance and \$5 million in economic aid over a two-year period.<sup>56</sup> Carter had decided on the arms package for Somalia although Somalia remained involved in the conflict that continued to rage in the Ogaden. He believed U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf region to be in a critical stage, and abandoned his requirement that the U.S.A. would not even consider supplying Somalia armaments before they were out of the Ogaden. Because of long production times, no U.S. arms actually reached Somalia during Carter's presidency, but it was his decision that initiated a ten-year long U.S. security-assistance program for the Somali regime.

## Conclusion

The rationale behind Carter's arms transfer policy to Somalia in the period 1979–1980 differed from that of 1977–1978. Conditions in the Horn of Africa in the first two years of his term of office favored refusing Somali arms requests. However, the refusals were the result not of PD-13, but of a strategy aimed at eventually dispelling Soviet influence in Ethiopia. This goal was considered unachievable if the U.S.A. should initiate an arms transfer relationship with Ethiopia's antagonist, Somalia.

In 1979 conditions changed, and U.S. arms transfer policy to Somalia in 1979–80 serves as a clear example of how Carter used arms transfers to Third World countries as a tool in the resumption of the global superpower competition. As with several of Carter's other arms transfer decisions during his last two years in office, such as providing North Yemen and Pakistan with large arms packages, the decision to provide armaments to Somalia was driven by a resumption of a forceful containment policy. Another important condition for Carter's disregard of arms transfer restraint in

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<sup>55</sup> Memorandum (secret), Jimmy Carter to Cyrus Vance, March 3, 1980, JCL, National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 50-68, "Presidential Determinations 8/79–5/80" folder.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum of conversation (top secret), June 18, 1980, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80–6/80" folder; and cable (secret), Warren Christopher to Embassy Mogadishu, July 2, 1980, Donated Historical Materials, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 7/80–9/80" folder.

1979 to 1980 was the strength with which senior foreign officials negative to PD-13, most importantly Zbigniew Brzezinski, advocated transferring arms to Somalia. While Brzezinski was unable to convince Carter in 1977 and 1978, the deteriorating superpower relations, and the perceived need for the U.S.A. to acquire military bases in the Persian Gulf area in 1979 and 1980, led Carter and the majority of his administration to change their minds.

## Chapter 11

# Taiwan

## Background

From 1969 to 1972, President Richard Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger had been engaged in a policy of rapprochement toward the People's Republic of China (PRC). This led to PRC membership in the United Nations, replacing the Republic of China on Taiwan, but not to U.S. diplomatic recognition of the PRC. Jimmy Carter continued Nixon's rapprochement policy. From mid-1978, Washington and Beijing were engaged in secret government-level negotiations. Then, in a surprise move on December 15 that year, Carter and the Chinese premier Hua Guofeng announced normalization of relations, to be effective from January 1, 1979. This was one of Carter's most significant foreign policy achievements and it had important consequences for the U.S. arms sales policy toward both mainland China, and toward the Republic of China (Taiwan, ROC), which no longer enjoyed normal diplomatic relations with the U.S.A.

During the secret negotiations, Carter acquiesced to three Chinese conditions. The U.S. would: (1) de-recognize and break off diplomatic relations with the ROC; (2) withdraw all U.S. military forces from Taiwan;<sup>1</sup> and (3) cancel the U.S.–Taiwanese Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954.<sup>2</sup> The arms-transfer relationship between the U.S.A. and the ROC was an important subject in the negotiations. Beijing pressed hard for Washington to end arms transfers to Taiwan. Carter refused and would not even promise reductions. The two sides therefore “agreed to disagree” on this issue. In April 1979, Congress passed a Taiwan Relations Act, to safeguard future U.S. arms deliveries to the island. To this day, U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan have continued to be a contentious issue in Sino–U.S. relations.

Following the deterioration of relations between Moscow and Beijing and serious border clashes in 1969, U.S. and PRC interests began to converge. The improvement

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<sup>1</sup> While the United States had 10,000 soldiers and military advisors stationed in Taiwan in 1972, this number had by the time of Carter's inauguration been reduced to a mere 750.

<sup>2</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy*, New York, 1983, p. 77.

of Sino–U.S. relations was publicly portrayed as a bilateral development.<sup>3</sup> However, after the Soviet-supported Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 and the Sino–Vietnamese war of February/March 1979, it became obvious that part of Carter’s Brzezinski-inspired strategy was to forge closer security ties with the PRC, so as to isolate Vietnam and reduce Soviet influence in East Asia. In early 1979, the Carter Administration began discussing the feasibility of providing the PRC with military equipment and/or sophisticated U.S. civilian technology with possible military use. By supplying such material, Washington could help improve China’s defense posture toward the Soviet Union, and tie up Soviet forces on the long border with China.

This chapter surveys the Carter Administration’s arms transfer policy toward Taiwan in light of the then-ongoing normalization process with China. It looks at the objectives of the arms transfer policy toward the two Chinas, and discusses whether Carter’s Taiwan policy was affected by the restraint policy or was based solely on geopolitical considerations related to the onset of the “Second Cold War” between the United States and the Soviet Union.

## **Arms transfers to Taiwan**

The U.S.A. has been the ROC’s main arms supplier ever since its separation from mainland China in 1949/50. In the period from 1950 to 1976, the United States was almost the sole supplier, providing, through grants and sales, more than \$3 billion worth of military equipment.<sup>4</sup> For good reasons, the Taiwanese felt threatened by the improving relations between Washington and Beijing from 1971 onwards. They believed that Sino–U.S. rapprochement would make the U.S.A. less receptive to their security needs. To reduce dependence on Washington, Taipei established an indigenous arms industry.<sup>5</sup> The most sophisticated arms produced in Taiwan, like the U.S.-origin F-5E fighter aircraft and helicopters, were made under co-production

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<sup>3</sup> Even in 1980, when it was obvious that Sino–U.S. relations were based largely on parallel security interests against the Soviet Union, the administration continued in public to maintain that the relationship was not directed against the Soviets. See for example, “News Conference by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Beijing, China,” January 9, 1980, the National Security Archives [henceforth NSA], *China and the United States, 1960–1998*, Fiche 99, Document 490. Here Brown stated: ‘the friendship between the United States and China is not directed against any other nation.’

<sup>4</sup> Author’s calculations. Grants made under the Military Assistance Program amounted to about \$2.5 billion, and sales made under the Foreign Military Sales Program amounted to approximately \$500 million. While grants dominated from 1950 to the late 1960s, after 1970 most supplies were made through sales. U.S. Department of Defense, Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1980 edition, pp. 8–9; and 39–40.

<sup>5</sup> Janne Nolan, *Military Industry in Taiwan and South Korea*, London, 1986, p. 19.

agreements. Despite increasing production in the 1970s, this industry was far from large enough to fulfill the Taiwanese military requirements, so when Carter took office, Taiwan still depended on the U.S.A. for most of its arms supplies.

U.S. arms sales to Taiwan during Carter's presidency were guided by three main concerns: (1) Chinese reactions, (2) historical obligations, and (3) the Taiwanese lobby in Washington.

The U.S. arms transfer policy to the ROC was the most difficult subject in the normalization talks between Washington and Beijing. Neither Nixon nor Ford had altered their military assistance relationship with Taiwan, and between 1970 and 1976, the United States had provided Taiwan with \$670 million worth of military equipment.<sup>6</sup> During the Carter Administration's negotiations with the PRC, Beijing sought to persuade Washington to stop military transfers to the ROC, but Carter insisted on continued transfer of a 'limited number of defensive weapons.'<sup>7</sup> The Chinese realized that the U.S.A. would not budge on this issue and agreed to normalization despite continued arms transfers to the ROC.<sup>8</sup> As a sign of goodwill, Carter promised that the United States would refrain from negotiating any new arms sales with Taiwan for one year, but Cyrus Vance made it clear that arms already on order would be sent, and that 'in the post-1979 period we will be meeting new orders as they come in.'<sup>9</sup>

Following the abrogation of the other security elements in the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, arms transfers gained increased symbolic as well as material significance. The Carter Administration agreed internally that supplies should continue, but disagreed on the level of military assistance. Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski differed on how to harmonize the objectives of improving relations with the PRC and securing the ROC. Vance, who advocated an unchanged arms transfer relationship, writes in his memoirs that 'some of the President's advisers, particularly Zbig [Brzezinski], were so anxious to move rapidly toward normalization that they

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<sup>6</sup> Author's calculations. DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, pp. 4 and 19.

<sup>7</sup> Replies by the Secretary of State to questions asked at a television interview, December 17, 1978. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, Washington D.C., 1983, p. 971.

<sup>8</sup> Burton I. Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, Kansas, 1993, p. 129.

<sup>9</sup> Replies by the Secretary of State to questions asked at a television interview, December 17, 1978. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents 1977-1980*, p. 972.

seemed ready to compromise the well-being of the people of Taiwan.<sup>10</sup> Brzezinski also wanted to continue arms transfers to Taiwan, but he wished to keep them at a minimum so that they would not impede his objective of improving relations with Beijing. In other controversial arms transfer decisions –relating to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, North Yemen, Pakistan, and Iran – Brzezinski encouraged the use of increased arms transfers to promote U.S. interests. In the case of Taiwan, however, his pragmatic approach went in favor of restrictions on arms transfers, thus incidentally converging with the aim of Carter’s restraint policy. However, Brzezinski’s interest was not arms transfer restraint *per se*, but Sino–U.S. rapprochement within a global geopolitical strategy.

The Sino–U.S. agreement was presented to Congress as a *fait accompli*.<sup>11</sup> Following its announcement, much to the chagrin of Carter, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which stated clearly that the U.S.A. would continue to provide Taiwan with military equipment. It mandated that ‘the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.’<sup>12</sup> It also stated that the President and Congress would be the sole judges of what were the defense needs of Taiwan,<sup>13</sup> implicitly saying that reactions by other countries [read: China] would not be taken into account. Despite this Act, through the remaining part of Carter’s time in office, possible Chinese reactions were an important, and often the decisive, consideration in the administration’s decision-making on arms requests from Taiwan.

Starting in 1973, Taiwan co-produced the U.S.-origin F-5E jet combat aircraft under license from the Northrop Corporation. This, as well as other planes in the Taiwanese

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<sup>10</sup> Vance was also against abrogating the U.S.–Taiwan defense treaty. Vance, *Hard Choices*, p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, “U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan: Institutionalized Ambiguity,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 12, 1986, p. 1326. Concerning the administration’s discussions with Congress prior to the final Sino–U.S. agreement, Director of the Department of State’s Office of Chinese Affairs Harry Thayer said in 2001: ‘Our consultations on China were informal, and we talked often, at all levels, with individual members of both houses. Republican and Democrat and their staffs. We also testified in informal committee sessions. But State did not have what the Congress felt was appropriate consultations on China. And the Hill raised holy hell with us and with the president when he announced the normalization of relations with China, explicitly accusing that we had not consulted Congress adequately.’ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino–American Relations 1945–1996*, New York, 2001, p. 332.

<sup>12</sup> *Taiwan Relations Act*, Public Law 98-8, 96<sup>th</sup> Congress, Section 3(a).

<sup>13</sup> *Taiwan Relations Act*, Public Law 98-8, 96<sup>th</sup> Congress, Section 3(b).

inventory like the Pratt and Whitney F-100 and Lockheed F-104, was becoming outdated. From 1976, the Taiwanese repeatedly requested to purchase the McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantom. With a 1,000-mile range, this plane could reach mainland China from Taiwan and was more sophisticated than the F-5E.

The request for F-4s was repeated in early 1978, and resulted in lengthy internal discussions within the Carter Administration. In the internal debate, the normalization process with the PRC was the essential consideration, because Beijing could be expected to view supply of F-4s to Taiwan as a deliberate provocation.<sup>14</sup> The Defense and State Departments disagreed over which plane to export to Taiwan. The Pentagon favored the F-4 because of 'the long-term protection they will offer to ROC security and the domestic political benefit such a sale would have on the Taiwan Lobby.'<sup>15</sup> The State Department, and Brzezinski's National Security Council, were united in favoring the less sophisticated F-5E 'because anything beyond that may provoke Beijing.'<sup>16</sup> Another consideration that probably affected the eventual decision was that Kissinger in 1973 had assured Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai that the United States would not sell F-4s to Taiwan.<sup>17</sup> Carter followed the advice of Vance and Brzezinski and rejected the F-4 request. However, he prolonged until 1983 the co-production of F-5Es, which originally should have ended by 1980.

Supplying F-4s to Taiwan would have broken with control 2 of PD-13, because none of the countries in the region had aircraft as sophisticated as the F-4. However, Carter's decision to let Taiwan co-produce the F-5E broke with control 4, which prohibited 'agreements for coproduction of significant weapons, equipment, or major components.'<sup>18</sup> The control was probably sacrificed because Carter needed to provide Taiwan with compensation for the rejection of the request for F-4s. Deliberations

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<sup>14</sup> Staff Secretary in the National Security Council Christine Dodson, in analyzing the different options for U.S. transfer of fighter aircraft to Taiwan, voiced a common objection within the administration to the sale: she considered it as a 'high risk option as far as our relations with Peking are concerned.' Memorandum (secret) Christine Dodson to the Secretary of State, et al., April 14, 1978, Jimmy Carter Library [henceforth JCL], National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, April 18, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum of conversation (secret), April 11, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum (secret), Mike Armacost, Mike Oksenberg and Les Denend to Zbigniew Brzezinski, April 18, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>18</sup> Presidential Directive 13 (secret), May 13, 1977, JCL, Vertical Files, Presidential Directives, "Presidential Directives 1-20" folder.



within the administration focused not so much on the restraint policy, as on the consequences that the different options would have on U.S. geopolitical interests in East Asia.<sup>19</sup> The normalization process with the PRC, as well as the growing hostility between the Soviet Union on the one side, and the PRC, Japan and the U.S.A. on the other, overshadowed the arms transfer restraint policy.

After the one-year moratorium on arms sales to Taiwan ended on January 1, 1980, the Carter Administration again negotiated large arms-sales agreements with the government in Taipei. On January 2, 1980, the State Department notified Congress that it would provide Taiwan with \$280 million in military credit for the purchase of U.S. armaments.<sup>20</sup> Taiwan again requested F-4s, so a new round of discussions within the administration ensued. It was still the administration's policy to reject the request, but this time it tried to get the Taiwanese interested in the Israeli Kfir fighter instead. As noted in the chapter on Latin America, the Kfir contained a U.S.-designed engine, and Carter had earlier refused Israeli requests for permission to sell it to third countries.

The refusal of Taiwan's F-4 request and the willingness to let Israel export Kfir cannot be explained by arms control considerations. The Kfir is powered by a General Electric J79, the same engine as in the F-4, and the two planes are similar in sophistication. Rather, as with the 1978 refusal of F-4s, the decision must be explained by the Carter Administration's objective of not endangering the relationship with Beijing, while at the same time continuing to show support for Taiwan. The export of Kfirs would be less likely to offend the Chinese than export of F-4s. In the end, Taiwan rejected the Israeli offer,<sup>21</sup> but by giving permission, Carter showed that he was willing to bypass control 5 of PD-13, which stipulated that the United States would not permit any retransfer of U.S. equipment unless it itself was ready to export a similar weapons system.

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, memorandum of conversation (secret), April 11, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, p. 216.

<sup>21</sup> The Taiwanese showed some interest in the Kfir but did not purchase any. This was probably due to the consideration that increased Israeli-Taiwanese security ties would be viewed negatively by Saudi Arabia, from which Taiwan purchased most of its oil. NSC officials had in fact assumed this would be the result long before Israel was given permission to sell the plane to Taiwan. See memorandum (secret), Mike Armacost, Mike Oksenberg and Les Denend to Zbigniew Brzezinski, April 18, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder. Taiwanese authorities also preferred to purchase weapons from the United States because such transactions demonstrated continued U.S. support for its security.

After Taiwan had rejected the Kfirs, Carter again made a policy change. Contradicting control 3 of PD-13, which prohibited development of advanced weapons systems solely for export, Carter in January 1980 permitted General Dynamics and Northrop to compete for the rights to produce an export fighter, tentatively called FX (Fighter for Export).<sup>22</sup> Following protests by several Congressmen against the decision to deny Taiwan F-4s and referring to the obligation in the Taiwan Relations Act to provide the ROC with adequate weapons to defend itself, Carter in mid-1980 permitted General Dynamics and Northrop to negotiate with Taiwan the sale of the FX.<sup>23</sup> By letting U.S. defense contractors negotiate sales of FX, Carter signaled that he would approve eventual sale requests. This decision was leaked to the press by the Taiwan-friendly Senator Richard Stone, and led to sharp protests from Beijing.<sup>24</sup> When Carter left office in January 1981, the FX was not yet ready for production. The decision on further export of fighter aircraft to Taiwan was thus left to the incoming Reagan Administration.<sup>25</sup>

Why did Carter change his policy from the 1978 decision not to sell Taiwan fighters more modern than the F-5E, to the decisions in 1980 to let Israel sell Taiwan Kfirs and allow defense contractors to negotiate sales of FX? There were no significant changes in the military status between China and Taiwan during the period, and the PRC had not improved its navy or air force enough for this to explain the shift of policy. Carter's arms restraint policy does not appear to have influenced the decisions made in 1978, and certainly did not play a part in the 1980 decision-making. The explanation for the policy shift probably lies in U.S. domestic politics. Influential members of Congress criticized Carter's Taiwan policy and he came under pressure from the powerful Taiwanese lobby in Washington. Although the "China Lobby" lost some of its influence over U.S. Asia policy in the 1970s, it was still a powerful force. Domestic political considerations had been discussed when Carter rejected the F-4

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<sup>22</sup> Memorandum (confidential), Robert M. Kimmitt and Roger Sullivan to Zbigniew Brzezinski, May 20, 1980, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 23, "Meetings—Muskie/Brown/Brzezinski: 5/80–6/80" folder.

<sup>23</sup> "China Steps up Protest of US Arms for Taiwan," *The Washington Post*, June 22, 1980, p. 19; and Nolan, *Military Industry in Taiwan and South Korea*, pp. 36–37.

<sup>24</sup> *The Washington Post*, June 22, 1980, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> In seeking to improve relations with China, Reagan in 1982 barred U.S. export of new fighters to Taiwan. The Taiwanese started production of an indigenous defense fighter, the Ching-kuo. In 1992, the Bush Administration decided to sell Taiwan 150 F-16s.

request in 1978,<sup>26</sup> but these were not decisive. However, 1980 was an election year: and that was likely the major motivation for Carter's willingness to supply Taiwan with fighters more sophisticated than the F-5E. However, to sell Taiwan the F-4 and thus break Kissinger's 1973 promise to the Chinese could have jeopardized one of Carter's few foreign policy successes – the improvement of relations with the PRC. Carter therefore sought to compromise by letting it be known that he would be willing to supply Taiwan with an aircraft that possessed performance characteristics between that of the F-5E and the F-4.

## Conclusion

This case shows that even if Brzezinski, the main architect of several large arms transfers, favored restraint, the result could be the opposite. While government-negotiated arms sales agreements made with Taipei in 1977 had amounted to \$155 million, they increased to \$526 million in 1980. This was \$200 million more than it had been in 1976, the peak year for arms sales to the ROC during the two preceding Republican administrations.<sup>27</sup> The increase was partly a result of pressure by the Taiwan lobby and Taiwan-friendly senators, but was also connected with concern for the upcoming presidential election. Most important of all was probably the wish to assuage Taiwanese reactions to the loss of U.S. diplomatic recognition.

Beijing did not protest against exports of U.S. arms to Taiwan, but reacted to sales of sophisticated equipment capable of modernizing Taiwan's military forces. This acceptance of quantity but not of quality seems to have been a major factor in the Carter Administration's handling of Taiwanese arms requests. On the one hand, Carter rejected requests for F-4s, Harpoon anti-ship missiles and certain modern air-defense missiles. However, he compensated for these refusals by increasing the quantity of arms – because this was not believed to jeopardize Sino-U.S. relations.

Despite the rejection of the F-4 request, Carter cannot be said to have followed a policy of arms transfer restraint with relation to Taiwan. The refusal was made because of other foreign policy objectives and cannot be ascribed to any determination to follow PD-13. The Reagan Administration, which promoted an active use of arms transfers in foreign policy and seriously increased U.S. arms transfers,

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<sup>26</sup> See memorandum of conversation (secret), April 11, 1978, JCL, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Far East, Box 7, "Armacost Chron File, 4/11-18/78" folder.

<sup>27</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 2.

also refused Taiwanese requests for sophisticated fighter aircraft. With both Carter's and Reagan's rejections of these requests, the main underlying rationale was the overriding objective of protecting and further improving U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Another proof/indication that geopolitical considerations prevailed over the arms transfer restraint policy is that the Carter Administration, in 1979, made the PRC eligible to purchase some military equipment and sophisticated civilian technology with possible military use.

## Conclusion

Jimmy Carter's calls for restraint in arms transfers, reiterated during the 1976 presidential campaign, were not mere rhetoric. Public statements, internal documents, and the memoirs of Carter and his main foreign policy advisers all show that he sincerely wished to reduce the global arms trade and that he believed in his "world order" policy – at least, at the outset.

All the same, Carter's arms transfer restraint policy was not highly successful and he did not live up to his election promise of significantly reducing the level and sophistication of U.S. arms transfers to Third World countries. On the other hand, to conclude, as does Leslie Gelb, Director of the State Department's office of Politico-Military Affairs, that the policy was 'very unsuccessful,'<sup>1</sup> is not fully justified. The only other senior member of the Carter Administration who has publicly commented on the degree of success of the restraint policy is National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. In his memoirs he presents two conflicting views. In one paragraph he writes: 'arms sales, or rather their projected reduction, constitutes another area in which high moral ambitions produced slender results.'<sup>2</sup> In another paragraph he says that the administration managed to create a 'partially effective restraint on nuclear proliferation and world-wide sales of arms.'<sup>3</sup>

Even though the Carter Administration did not follow up the policy with much consistency, it did have effect under certain conditions. The administration refused several arms requests on the basis of the policy, and Presidential Directive 13 (PD-13) was implemented toward certain countries and regions.

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<sup>1</sup> "An Interview with Leslie Gelb," *Arms Control Today*, No. 8, September 1980, p. 1. For scholarly conclusions on the effectiveness of Carter's restraint policy see Paul L. Ferrari, Jeffrey W. Knopf and Raúl L. Madrid, *US Arms Exports: Policies and Contractors*, Washington D.C., 1987, pp. 24–31; Jo L. Husbands, "The Arms Connection: Jimmy Carter and the Politics of Military Exports," in Cindy Cannizzo, ed., *The Gun Merchants: Politics and Policies of the Major Suppliers*, New York, 1980, pp. 18–45; Joanna Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales: Implementing the Carter Administration's Arms Transfer Restraint Policy*, Ipswich, 1995, pp. 175–195; Richard K. Betts, "The Tragicomedy of Arms Trade Control," *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1980, pp. 80–110; William D. Hartung, "Why Sell Arms? Lessons from the Carter Years," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1993, pp. 57–64; Michael T. Klare, *American Arms Supermarket*, Austin, TX, 1984; Alvin J. Cottrell, Robert Hanks and Michael Moodie, *Arms Transfers and U.S. Foreign and Military Policy*, Washington, D.C., 1980, pp. 24–32; and Andrew J. Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton, NJ, 1982, pp. 54–61.

<sup>2</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981*, New York, 1983, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 528–529.

This concluding chapter will, by drawing on the case studies presented in the thesis and also on some other examples of arms transfer, discuss the grade of success of PD-13 and seek to establish the conditions under which the Carter Administration was able to implement its arms transfer restraint policy.

## **The quantitative dimension**

A comparison of the dollar-values of U.S. arms sales during the Carter presidency with the level of sales under the preceding and following administrations indicates a trend. Indeed, examining the dollar-value of transfers is also the only method by which to judge whether Carter implemented control 1 of PD-13, which stated that his administration would annually reduce the level of U.S. arms exports.

### **Manipulation of transfer statistics**

During the two years with operational ceilings – fiscal years 1978 and 1979 – Carter committed himself to reducing arms transfers to non-exempt countries by eight percent, after accounting for inflation, from the previous year's total. Official arms-transfer data from the State and Defense Departments<sup>4</sup> show that the administration stayed below this self-imposed dollar level in both years. Thus, one may conclude that the ceiling policy was a success until fiscal year 1980. However, because of the nature of the guideline and because the figures were manipulated, the degree of its effectiveness needs to be discussed also for those two years.

To rescue the ceilings of 1978 and 1979, the Carter Administration pushed several sales into the next fiscal year. The most obvious example is the decision to place significant portions of the 1978 Middle East aircraft package in future fiscal years. Otherwise, the ceiling would have been broken. The administration also negotiated several arms transactions – with Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Morocco – which it did not sign and which therefore were not counted under the ceiling. These agreements were left to be calculated under sales statistics for the next presidency. While previous administrations had left Carter with a backlog of \$27 billion in arms deliveries, Carter left Ronald Reagan a backlog of \$43.5 billion.<sup>5</sup> The Carter

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers* [henceforth ACDA, *WMEAT*] 1985, Washington D.C., 1985; and U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance* [henceforth DSAA, *FMS*], 1981 edition.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre, *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, p. 57.

Administration at times also kept itself under the ceiling by letting other arms producers sell major weapons systems to U.S. allies and friends, and supplementing these sales with important U.S.-produced subsystems. The largest of these arrangements was negotiated in 1978, when the Shah of Iran imported \$2 billion worth of warships from West Germany and the Netherlands, and the United States delivered the weapons suites for the boats at a cost of \$350 million. While the arrangement certainly did not reduce global arms proliferation, it ensured that Washington could stay below the 1978 ceiling. Because the ceiling was the most visible part of PD-13 and its success could easily be assessed by examining arms transfer data, the Carter Administration used such creative accounting procedures to show policy achievements – and part of the objective of the control was lost.

### **Exemptions from the ceiling**

A major flaw of the control was that it did not include services such as training, military construction, technical assistance, transportation and administration costs. Saudi Arabia alone purchased \$2.5 billion worth of U.S.-constructed military infrastructure such as airfields and port facilities in the period 1977 to 1980.<sup>6</sup> Sales categorized as services and thereby exempted from the ceiling reached \$2.8 billion in 1978, representing 20 percent of total U.S. sales.<sup>7</sup> Another weakness of the ceiling was that it did not apply to commercial sales. Carter justified this by arguing that commercial sales were already subject to strict licensing arrangements.<sup>8</sup> However, because of the nature of arms transfers negotiated by U.S. industry, these requests were seldom scrutinized as closely as government-negotiated transactions. Commercial sales generally involved less sophisticated and less expensive weapons, and were therefore traditionally handled in a routine manner by the arms transfer bureaucracy. Only rarely were they raised to the political level and considered by the political appointees. Because of resentment to changing traditional procedures, transfer requests decided on by the bureaucracy alone were not much influenced by the new arms transfer policy. As early as in November 1977, Brzezinski informed Carter that there was 'bureaucratic resistance' to the arms transfer policy 'in the

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<sup>6</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Husbands, "The Arms Connection: Jimmy Carter and the Politics of Military Exports," p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy, 19 May 1977, *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 931.

Defense Department and to some extent in the State Department.<sup>9</sup> While commercial sales agreements totaled \$1.4 billion in fiscal year 1976, they increased to \$1.9 billion in fiscal year 1980.<sup>10</sup>

It was not only quantitatively that exempting commercial sales from the ceiling had a negative effect on implementation of the restraint policy. Carter's arms transfer policy was closely connected with his human rights policy. Most arms associated with internal repression – such as small arms, anti-riot weapons and police equipment – were usually sold through the commercial arms-sales program. As long as these sales requests were not guided by PD-13 and were mostly handled by career bureaucrats, they were generally decided on in the same manner as they had been during previous presidents. U.S.-produced arms that had been used to commit human rights violations continued to be sold to countries such as Indonesia, Iran, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand. For comprehensive implementation of the restraint policy, the ceiling would have had to include all arms sales programs, and not focused exclusively on government-to-government negotiated transfers.

### **The loss of Iran as arms customer**

The United States sold Iran approximately \$2.4 billion worth of military equipment in fiscal year 1977. This was more than one-third of all U.S. arms exports that year.<sup>11</sup> When the Shah of Iran was overthrown in January 1979 and Washington ended its arms sales program to the country, the ceiling lost its merit. If the ceiling were to remain a controlling mechanism it should have been adjusted downward. It was not: instead, it became a target to reach, rather than an upper limit. As a result of successful marketing trips by Defense Secretary Harold Brown to the Middle East, the ceiling was filled by new arms agreements with North Yemen, Morocco, and Oman, and expansion and acceleration of existing transfer agreements with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel. However, the loss of Iran as an arms recipient did not lead to increased sales to other regions such as Latin America and Africa south of Sahara, where the Carter Administration kept the quantity of transfers relatively low. In 1980, government-negotiated arms transfer agreements reached \$44 million for Africa, \$33

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<sup>9</sup> Memorandum (top secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 11, 1977, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 41, "Weekly Reports to the President, 31–41" folder.

<sup>10</sup> Values in current dollars. DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, pp. 29–30.

<sup>11</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, p. 8.



million for Latin America and \$6.9 billion for the Near East and South Asia.<sup>12</sup> Transfers were increased mainly to the regions considered the most important for U.S. political, economic, and especially security interests.

### **The ceiling and its effects on arms transfer management**

In addition to reducing the dollar-value of transfers, the ceiling was intended to force the Executive branch to set priorities among arms requests. As shown, the Carter Administration's attempt at controlling the level of U.S. arms transfers through a quantitative ceiling was far from ideal, and was much criticized both during his term in the White House and afterwards. However, the control had some positive effects. When Carter took office, U.S. arms sales policy was seen by many commentators and politicians to be out of control, largely because of disorderly management of arms transfer decisions. The ceiling improved the conditions under which decisions on arms sales were made, and partially achieved one of its objectives: to create a more systematic and centralized decision-making process in the Executive branch's management of weapons transfers, although this mainly concerned government-negotiated agreements. Further, it increased the involvement of senior officials through more detailed review processes and produced a framework for placing arms-transfer decisions in a broader foreign-policy perspective. It also created a more consistent method to examine arms transfers through a more specific guideline, even though it was only a numerical one.

### **Cooperation by other arms-producing countries**

Carter repeatedly stated in 1977 and 1978 that the retention of the ceiling depended on other arms producers decreasing their sales,<sup>13</sup> and the ceiling was the control of PD-13 that was the most severely affected by lack of cooperation on restraint from other major arms suppliers. When the Carter Administration abandoned the ceiling in

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<sup>12</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, pp. 2–5. African customers were Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Sudan and Zaire. Latin American customers were Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Customers in the Near East and South Asia were Bahrain, Egypt, India, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and North Yemen.

<sup>13</sup> See for example "Statement by the President on the conventional arms transfer policy," May 19, 1977, pp. 931–932; "Statement by the President on conventional arms transfer policy," February 1, 1978, *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, p. 256; and Statement by the President on United States arms transfer levels, November 29, 1978, *Public Papers of the President: Jimmy Carter*, pp. 184–185.

1980, the official explanation given by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was that it could no longer be upheld because of 'the absence of agreed international restraint.'<sup>14</sup>

While this was certainly an important reason why the administration cancelled the control, there were also other considerations that influenced this decision. The control was heavily criticized from its outset by the defense industry and defenders of large arms-export programs in Congress. When Carter's diplomatic efforts at reaching bilateral and multilateral agreements on restraint in arms sales failed, and sales statistics showed that the United States was continually losing market shares to other exporters, the criticism increased. In addition, key officials, among them National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, who had never been strong supporters of the restraint policy, told Carter that they were dissatisfied with the control because it was not compatible with their strategy of curbing Soviet actions in Third World countries by increased U.S. arms transfers to friends and allies.

However, probably the most important reason why Carter scrapped the ceiling was the administration's practice of continuous postponement in signing transfer agreements to save the current year's ceiling. The result of this practice was that a huge part of the next year's room under the ceiling became taken up in advance by previous commitments. This made it difficult for the administration to respond to new arms requests, and the ceiling lost its viability as a policy tool. The ceiling was abandoned and the Foreign Military Sales program increased by more than \$3 billion from fiscal year 1979 to fiscal year 1980.<sup>15</sup>

While U.S. arms transfers had grown throughout the 1960s and 1970s, reaching \$9.9 billion in 1977, exports were down to \$8.9 billion in 1978 and \$7.7 billion in 1979. During the first year of the Reagan Administration, U.S. arms transfers again reached the level of the pre-Carter period, and in 1983 the United States sold a record \$10.2 billion worth of arms.<sup>16</sup> It is also worth noting that while Carter reduced U.S. arms transfers between 1977 and 1980, global arms exports increased by over \$5 billion in the same period.<sup>17</sup> All the other major arms suppliers augmented their market shares during the period. From 1977 to 1980 the Soviet Union increased its arms sales from

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Washington Post*, March 29, 1980, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> All values in constant 1982 dollars. ACDA, *WMEAT 1985*, p. 127.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

\$9.7 billion to \$13.5 billion, the United Kingdom from \$1.3 billion to \$2.2 billion, and France nearly doubled its sales, from \$1.7 billion to \$3.3 billion.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, by focusing on quantity and comparing the level of arms transferred by the U.S.A. during the Carter presidency with other administrations and Washington's major arms-sales competitors, Carter could appear to have lived up to his election pledge on arms transfer restraint. However, as has been shown in the case studies, to reach a conclusion about the effectiveness of PD-13, the implementation of the policy has to be examined from different perspectives. The rest of this chapter will examine how the policy was put into practice in the various regions, depending on their strategic importance, and in different time periods, depending on the intensity of the Soviet-U.S. rivalry.

## **The regional dimension**

PD-13 did not change the basic case-by-case method applied for evaluating arms requests. The most important consequence of this was that the restraint policy was implemented selectively. Ever since the United States became a major arms exporter during World War II, the sizes of arms transfer programs to Third World countries had been connected to the recipient's importance for U.S. political and military interests. Carter continued this policy and enforced PD-13 more vigorously toward countries perceived to be strategically less important than toward those with whom Washington saw itself as sharing vital security interests.

This goes far in explaining the number of refusals on arms requests and the cut in U.S. security assistance to several countries in Latin America. As has been shown, countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Uruguay were not perceived by the Carter Administration to be of great strategic significance in the superpower competition. All of them suffered U.S. security assistance cuts and had arms requests rejected. In fiscal year 1975, the Ford Administration had signed arms sales agreements worth \$174 million with Latin American countries. The Carter Administration reduced the level to approximately \$33 million in fiscal years 1979 and 1980.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 124–127.

<sup>19</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1980 edition, pp. 3–4.

Most important in the case of Latin America is that, in contrast to other regions and countries where PD-13 was implemented during Carter's first two to three years in office, his administration showed continuity in its arms transfer restraint toward Latin America throughout the period. This was a result of the region not becoming an important scene for the increasing hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union. This was not the case with most of the other countries whose arms requests Carter initially refused. In the period from 1977 to late 1979, Pakistan was not considered central to U.S. security interests, and Carter sought to avoid becoming involved in an arms buildup on the Indian subcontinent. PD-13 was therefore implemented toward Pakistan, and Islamabad's request to purchase 110 A-7 fighter-bombers was rejected because it would have broken control 2 by introducing a new sophisticated weapons system into the region. This was also the reason given for refusing a Swedish request to sell the Viggen aircraft, which included U.S.-made parts, to India.

The Middle East and East Asia were little affected by PD-13, and the record shows no substantial changes from previous administrations' arms transfer policies to these areas. While security assistance was denied and reduced to several Latin American governments because of their dismal records of human rights abuses, the Carter Administration supplied arms to other governments with no less abominable human rights practices, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand. In 1980, Carter also decided to provide Morocco with arms for use in its war against the West Saharan guerilla forces.

The explanation for this inconsistent implementation of the arms transfer and human rights policy is, as mentioned, the countries' varying degree of strategic importance for U.S. foreign policy. The guidelines of PD-13 were to a larger degree implemented toward the countries with which the United States did not have important security interests, than toward more valued allies, which, no matter what the nature of their government, rarely had their arms requests rejected.

The flexibility built into PD-13 allowed the president to set aside the controls if "extraordinary circumstances" arose, and this waiver was used to justify sales to countries with strategic importance for the U.S.A. According to control 2 of PD-13, the United States would not be the first to introduce into a region advanced weapons systems. Two examples of how this control could be broken were the decisions to sell

Iran AWACS and to provide the Sudan with F-5 trainers in 1977. In addition, Carter offered Israel and Egypt F-16s before the weapons system had been operationally deployed with U.S. forces.

A shortcoming of the policy was the vagueness of several key terms in the qualitative guidelines of PD-13, such as 'significantly higher combat capability' and 'region', which were so vague that there was great room for interpretation. This weakness was especially obvious when administration officials defended the 1978 Middle East aircraft package on a loose interpretation of control 2, saying that there were, according to Lucy Benson, Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, 'similar' aircraft in the region.<sup>20</sup> The aircraft to which she was referring were various versions of the Soviet MiG in Iraq and Syria, planes not nearly as sophisticated as the F-15 which was sold to Israel and Saudi Arabia. The administration was unwilling to admit breaking the controls of PD-13. Instead, as this and several other examples in the thesis have shown, it took advantage of these vague terms so as to meet the special needs of valued allies without breaking the wording of the PD-13.

## **The time dimension**

The findings of the case studies partly confirm the hypothesis outlined in the introductory chapter: PD-13 was more strictly applied to countries of little importance to Washington, and the policy was watered down in 1979 because containment of Soviet global influence again became Washington's top priority. However, the policy still had some effect after the resumption of the Cold War in 1979; arms transfers to Latin American countries were still restrained.

According to White House spokespersons, Washington rejected 614 arms requests from more than 60 countries, valued at about \$1 billion during Carter's first fifteen months in office.<sup>21</sup> However, the exact number and the dollar-value of the Carter Administration's refusals are impossible to verify because information on most refused arms requests is classified.

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<sup>20</sup> *Review of the President's Conventional Arms Transfer Policy: Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations House of Representatives*, February 1 and 2, 1978, Washington D.C., 1978, p. 88.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Changing perspectives on U.S. Arms Transfer Policy*, Washington D.C., 1981, p. 27.

Some of the refusals were reported by the administration. They show that, during the first half of his presidency, Carter was willing to turn down requests, even from important allies. One example was the refusal to let Iran purchase 250 F-18L jet fighters because it was a weapons system not operationally deployed with U.S. forces, and would have broken control 3, which prohibited production of weapons solely for export. Iran was also refused the Wild Weasel F4-G fighter-bomber, on the grounds that it would introduce a new, more advanced weapons system into the region.

Scholars have speculated that these and other refusals, such as rejection of requests from Pakistan and South Korea, were the result of considerations other than arms sales control.<sup>22</sup> Arms transfer decisions are never taken in a vacuum. The objectives behind individual sales and rejections are almost always numerous and diverse, so other considerations were of course factors in these refusals. What is important with respect to Carter's restraint policy was whether consideration of arms transfer control contributed to the rejections, and both public announcements and discussions within the administration show that arms transfer control did play a role in these and other refusals.

Over time, beginning in late 1978, as other foreign-policy objectives became perceived by Carter and a majority of his foreign-policy advisers as more important than the "world order" programs, PD-13 was weakened. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the restraint policy was abandoned – not officially, but in reality. The demise of the policy was mainly a consequence of two partially connected developments: the failure of diplomatic efforts to achieve cooperation with other suppliers, especially the Soviet Union, and the disruption of the process of détente.

The failure of the Carter Administration to reach multilateral restraint agreements seriously affected the unilateral measures. Without multilateral cooperation, other suppliers began to fill the vacuum left by Carter's unilateral policy. This led to greater pressure to soften the unilateral guidelines from both within and outside the administration. Brzezinski indicated to Carter already in November 1978 that the

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<sup>22</sup> See Graham Kearns, *Arms for the Poor: President Carter's Policies on Arms Transfers to the Third World*, Canberra, 1980, pp. 23–25; Spear, *Carter and Arms Sales*, pp. 158–161; and Andrew J. Pierre, "Arms Sales: The New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 1981/82, p. 280.

whole policy of arms transfer restraint should be moderated when it seemed that diplomatic efforts would not produce any results.<sup>23</sup> However, because the lack of results in its diplomatic efforts can be blamed partially on the administration's loose implementation of PD-13, the problem was a circular one. By announcing that he would sell AWACS to Iran barely one month after announcing the restraint policy, and by deciding to provide Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia with the world's most sophisticated fighter aircraft in the midst of the Conventional Arms Transfer talks, Carter revealed that he was not prepared to restrain arms sales to friendly states in regions of geopolitical importance to the United States. In addition, as shown in chapter 3, Washington increased its sales to NATO countries and did not open up for purchasing more arms from its allies. Thus, if the Western European countries were not to lose market shares, they were forced to export armaments to Third World countries.

To convince other arms suppliers of his seriousness in restraining U.S. arms transfers, it was obviously not enough for Carter to refuse some arms requests from Latin American countries. In order for the unilateral policy to stimulate multilateral restraint, as was the plan, the Carter Administration would probably have had to restrain its transfers to the area where it was the leading supplier and where 75 percent of all U.S. arms exports went: this was the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region. Because of the importance of this area to U.S. strategic planning, Carter and his closest foreign-policy advisers were not even interested in discussing Southwest Asia as a possible region for multilateral arms transfer restraint. So even if Carter wished to reduce global arms transfers, the objective did not warrant reducing arms transfers to the main allies of the United States.

Even though the lack of cooperation from other suppliers can partially explain the abrogation of the unilateral policy, more important were the deterioration in the international environment, the globalization of the Cold War and the ensuing rightward drift of Carter's foreign policy. The change can be dated to the collapse of the Iranian regime in late 1978; it was further intensified by events like the "discovery" of a Soviet brigade in Cuba in August 1979, the seizure of U.S. diplomats in Tehran in November 1979, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December

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<sup>23</sup> Memorandum (secret), Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, November 21, 1978, JCL, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Box 42, "Weekly Reports to the President, 71-81: 9/78-12/78" folder.

1979. As with the other elements of Carter's "global issues" or "world order agenda", such as human rights, nuclear proliferation, and international economic development, the arms transfer policy became subordinated to curbing what Washington perceived as Soviet expansionism in the Third World.

In 1979, the Carter Administration developed a new security strategy that shared many of the characteristics of the foreign policy of the Nixon and Ford Administrations – the most important being to maximize U.S. influence abroad while minimizing that of the Soviets. As a result, more Third World conflicts were viewed in the prism of superpower competition. An important component of the new strategy was to supply more and better weapons to allies and friendly states to enhance access to and leverage over the recipients' authorities and improve their defense capabilities against possible attacks from left-wing guerrillas and/or Soviet-supported forces. In addition, Washington increasingly used arms transfers to gain access to military bases in countries in the Persian Gulf region. Arms transfers to Somalia, the Sudan, Morocco and North Yemen, and the arms package proposal to Pakistan, all decided on in the latter half of Carter's presidential period, are prime examples of how arms transfers were used as the most important means of countering Soviet and pro-Soviet influence in strategic regions.

Also an important factor in explaining the weakening and the eventual abandonment of the restraint policy was the gradual growth in power of foreign-policy officials critical to PD-13. Early in his presidency, Carter took an active interest in arms transfers. The record shows that in 1977 and 1978, the President reviewed and decided on most of the major arms transfer requests. During his two final years in office, however, his "world order" objectives were relegated downward on the list of foreign policy objectives, in order to further the aim of augmenting U.S. political and military power. This led to greater influence for those officials critical to the restraint policy, and an increasing share of the transfer decisions were delegated to Carter's White House advisers, especially Brzezinski. Secretary Vance, who was positive toward the arms transfer restraint policy but gave priority to using his political power to defend the Strategic Arms Limitations negotiations with the Soviet Union against criticism from both within and outside the administration, rarely involved himself in decisions on the transfer of conventional arms. Although Carter did not follow all the recommendations of his National Security Adviser, Brzezinski was the central decision-maker in the administration's arms transfers policy in 1979 and 1980. He



was also the main architect behind controversial decisions such as the arming of North Yemen and Morocco, the decision to make China eligible for U.S. dual-use material and non-lethal military equipment, and the arms for access-to-bases agreement with Somalia in 1980. The value of government-negotiated agreements on arms transfers to the region Brzezinski termed the 'arc of crisis,'<sup>24</sup> which had its center in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, increased from about \$4.7 billion in fiscal year 1977 to about \$6.9 billion in fiscal year 1980.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the agencies designed to advise on the arms control impact of individual sales decisions lost authority and power. Especially important in this respect was the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), which was enlarged and granted more authority over arms transfer decisions during the first part of the Carter presidency than it had during all previous administrations since its birth in 1961. On several occasions in 1977 and 1978, Carter followed the advice of the agency's director, Paul Warnke. One example is when Warnke successfully advised Carter not to sell F-16s to South Korea in 1978, despite recommendations from Brzezinski, Brown and Vance. However, when Warnke left office in October 1978,<sup>26</sup> and the National Security Council staff and Brzezinski gained greater control over the arms transfer decision-making process, ACDA resumed its old position of relatively little influence. Because the officials and agencies traditionally positive towards arms sales as a foreign-policy tool gained more power over transfer decisions, and ACDA was the only governmental agency primarily dedicated to arms control, the restraint effort suffered from ACDA's lack of power during 1979 and 1980. ACDA's loss of power also serves as a reflection on the waning importance of arms transfer restraint as a policy objective.

## **Global implementation of PD-13?**

The case studies presented here have shown that several conditions would have had to be present to allow global implementation of Carter's restraint policy. Many of these were absent in regard to a majority of U.S. arms recipients, either throughout the presidency or after the intensification of the Cold War. This resulted in loose and geographically uneven application of the policy. The most important conditions for successful implementation of PD-13 were the following:

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<sup>24</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 443–447.

<sup>25</sup> DSAA, *FMS*, 1981 edition, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> The new ACDA Director, the retired general George Seignious, was recommended by Brzezinski and was more conservative than Warnke.

*A sincere desire to implement the policy.* The Scholar William Hartung concludes that 'undertaking a fundamental shift in arms sales policy requires forceful, persistent presidential leadership.'<sup>27</sup> This is obvious in the case of Carter's effort at restraining U.S. arms transfers. While there is no reason to doubt Carter's wish to reduce U.S. arms transfers during the 1976 election campaign and the first months into his presidency, it is probable that he did not foresee the full consequences of implementing a policy of restraint. Ever since 1945, U.S. arms transfers had been held to serve multiple foreign-policy objectives. The uneven implementation and the weakening of the restraint policy over time was a consequence of Carter's failure to challenge the basic rationales guiding U.S. arms transfers. The arms transfer reduction policy was never treated as the exceptional policy it was meant to be: instead it was used as a multipurpose instrument of U.S. foreign policy. Arms were sold and donated to support a cluster of strategic and political functions. In regions deemed crucial for U.S. security and in the period of renewed U.S.-Soviet hostilities, arms transfers continued to be one of the most important instruments for conducting foreign policy. Huge arms deals were negotiated to serve geopolitical security interests. The AWACS sale to Iran in 1977, the aircraft package to the Middle East in 1978, the arms aid to North Yemen in 1979, the proposed arms package for Pakistan and the arms for access to military bases in Somalia in 1980 are only the most obvious examples.

For Carter to have succeeded in seriously reducing U.S. transfers, he would have had to transform other parts of U.S. foreign policy, not only the arms transfer programs. Most importantly, he would have had to alter the practice of supplying countries perceived to be important for U.S. security strategy with large quantities of sophisticated arms to increase or maintain U.S. influence. As shown, the most important reason for the relatively forceful implementation of PD-13 in Latin America was the region's lack of importance, whereas the failure to implement PD-13 to regions such as the Middle East and East Asia can be explained by these regions' significance to U.S. security strategy. This component of foreign-policy influence on the implementation of PD-13 became increasingly apparent as U.S.-Soviet relations deteriorated, and the two superpowers stepped up their competition for influence in Third World countries. This brings us to the next condition:

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<sup>27</sup> Hartung, "Why Sell Arms," p. 59.

*Continuation of détente.* The window of opportunity for the restraint policy was in 1977-78. The arms transfer policy could hardly have been integrated with the change to a more forceful U.S. containment policy. Because of the changed international situation in 1979-80, it is improbable that any president could have forced through reductions in U.S. arms transfers.

From the outset, PD-13 was closely linked to the policy of détente and rested on a continuation of U.S.–Soviet cooperation in certain fields, such as restraint in superpower utilization of conflicts and disturbances in Third World countries to own advantage. Because arms transfers were used as an important crisis management tool, the restraint project needed stable international relations – and that disappeared in all the regions where the United States was a major arms exporter in 1979. The deterioration of superpower relations also contributed to the failure to achieve multilateral agreements on restraint, which is the next condition which would have needed to be present for successful implementation of PD-13.

*Multilateral restraint agreements.* For global implementation of PD-13, it would have been necessary to develop multilateral agreements on restraint in arms transfers. The failure to develop such agreements resulted in growing domestic pressure to abandon the policy, and a belief within the administration that unilateral arms transfer reductions could lead to the United States losing global influence. As shown in the chapter on diplomatic efforts, the Carter Administration might possibly have succeeded in its endeavor to negotiate a restraint regime with the Soviet Union if it had employed a different set of negotiation tactics. However, because of the resumption of the Cold War, any agreement would probably have crumbled eventually as a result of the escalating superpower competition.

The success of any future initiative on international reductions in conventional arms transfers depends on the presence of these three conditions. Because the U.S.A. presently controls an even greater share of the global arms transfer market than it did during the Cold War, the initiative will still have to come from Washington. With the end of the Cold War, arms transfers lost its role as a factor in the superpower competition, and new possibilities for international arms transfer reductions presented itself. Nevertheless, arms transfers still play an important role in U.S. foreign policy, and an arms transfer restraint policy still needs to be guided by a forceful, persistent

presidential leadership. However, any U.S. restraint effort will also today probably be conditioned on willingness on cooperation by other large arms producing countries.

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